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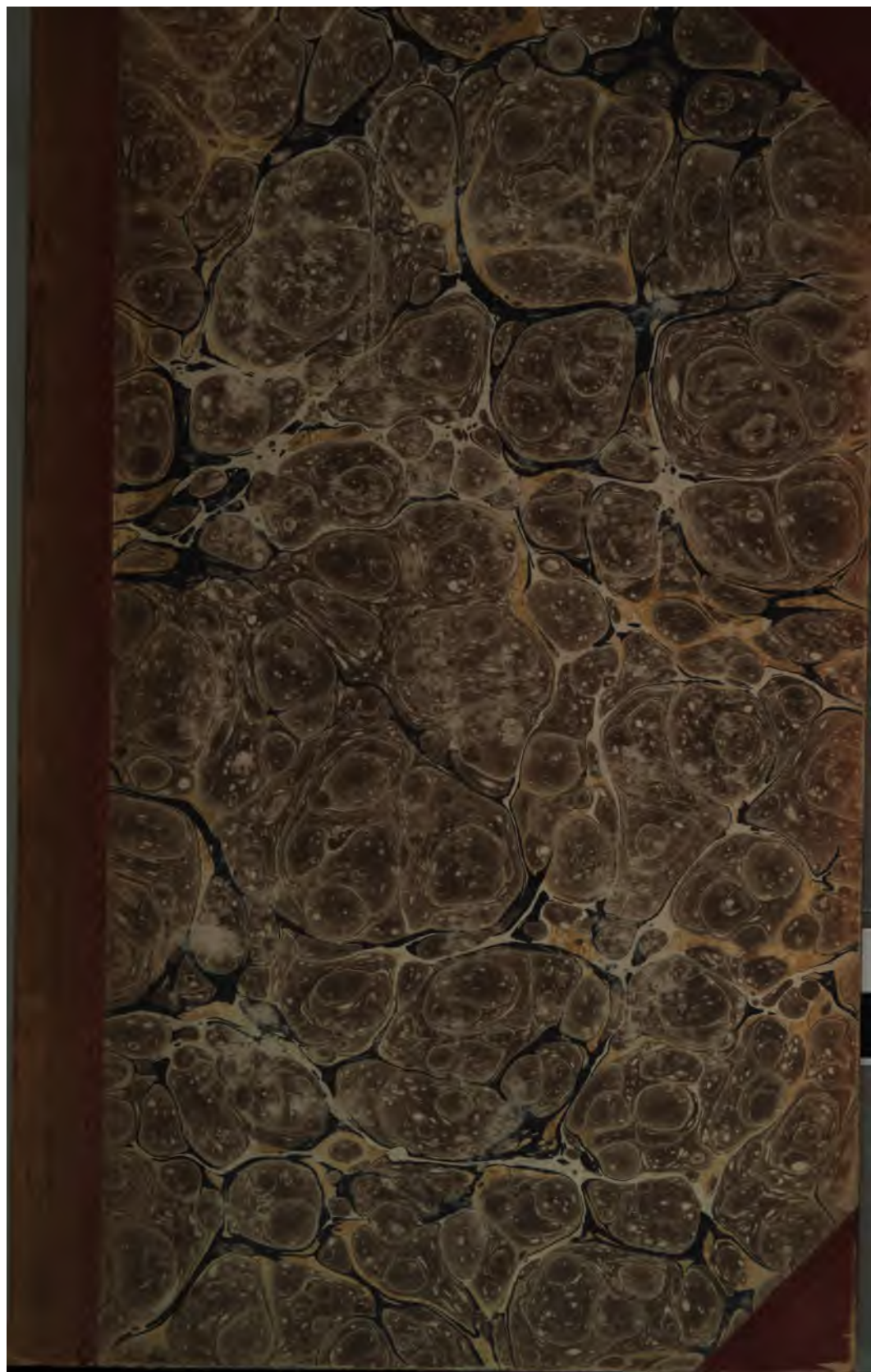
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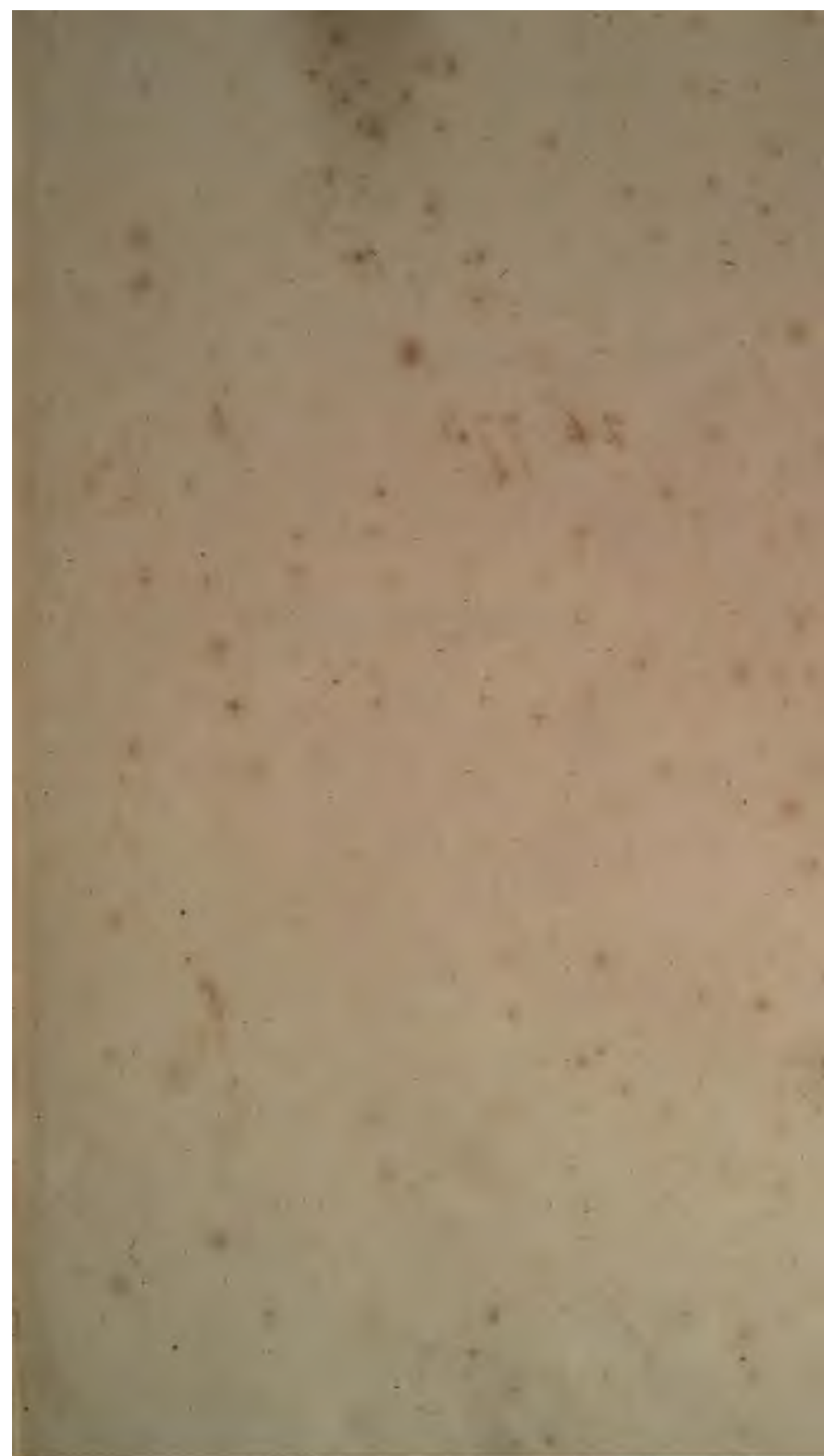






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**OBSERVATIONS,**

*&c.*



**LONDON :**  
**THOTSON AND PALMER, PRINTERS, SAVOY STREET, STRAND.**

*J. H. 1826*

# **OBSERVATIONS**

ON THE

**NATURE, EXTENT, AND EFFECTS**

**OF PAUPERISM**

AND

**ON THE MEANS OF REDUCING IT.**

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BY .

**THOMAS WALKER, M. A.**

**AND BARRISTER AT LAW.**

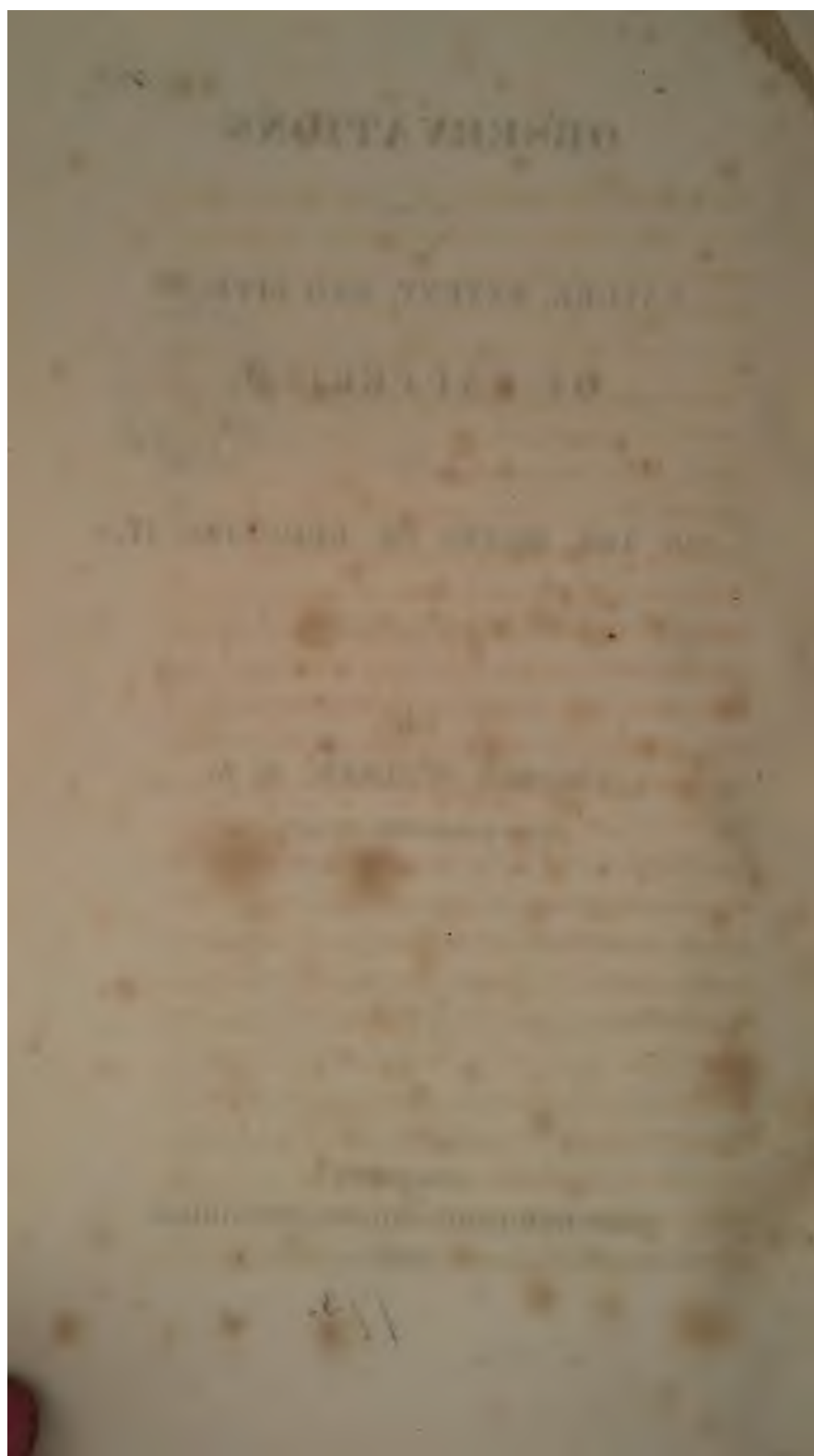
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**LONDON :**

**JOHN HATCHARD AND SON, PICCADILLY.**

**1826.**

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## OBSERVATIONS,

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For the satisfaction of the reader, as to my pretensions to offer this little treatise, I will commence with the following statement, which was committed to writing some years since when the particulars were quite fresh in my recollection.

In August 1817, an opportunity occurred to me of commencing an experiment on the subject of Pauperism in the township of Stretford, in the parish of Manchester—a district partly manufacturing, but principally agricultural, and containing about 2,000 acres of land and as many inhabitants. I began by procuring the adoption of somewhat the same plan as the Select Vestry, not then legalized—a suggestion of the neighbouring magistrate, Ralph Wright Esq. whom I consulted in the first instance, and

whose co-operation, as well as that of the most respectable inhabitants, I uniformly met with, during a residence at intervals of three years and a half. I soon found that the magistrates as usual had no confidence in the overseers, to the great gain of the paupers, whose appeals from the overseers to the magistrates were incessant. I found that the paupers were insolent in the extreme to the farmers, and in a great measure their masters—that the paupers were leagued together to get as much from the rates as possible, and that they practised all sorts of tricks and impositions for that purpose—that the industrious labourers were discouraged—the well-disposed inhabitants afraid, or persuaded that it was in vain to interfere—and every individual driven to do the best he could for himself or his connections at the general expense. For some time the paupers tried every art to deceive or tire me out, and some of those who were ousted from the management thwarted me in secret; but the good effects of the new system became so apparent, both as to economy and good order, that opposition grew less and less, and at last suddenly and entirely ceased. I spent almost my whole time for some months in visiting the labouring classes—in making myself perfect master of their habits—in explaining to

them the causes of their distress—and in enforcing, as occasions arose, the doctrines of Mr. Malthus, which I took care to put in the most familiar and pointed manner I was able, and I was surprised to see the effect generally produced—it was as if a new light had broken in upon my hearers. By degrees I gained their confidence—they constantly applied to me to settle their disputes, or for legal advice, or for assistance in whatever difficulties they found themselves; and as I was frequently able to serve them, I found that circumstance of great advantage in carrying into execution any measure of severity or privation. With respect to former abuses in the management, I made it a rule never to look back, but held that neglect on one side and imposition on the other had balanced the account, and that it would be better to look only to the future. I found this plan attended with the best effects. Those who had profited by abuse were glad to escape so easily. Those who really wished for what was right were not revolted by any appearance of harshness; and instead of wrangling about the past, every thing went on well for the present, and not one retrograde movement was made. A few hours in a week became sufficient to do all the business, and at last a trifling superin-

tendance was alone necessary. Information came to me from all quarters—the league amongst the paupers was dissolved—appeals to the magistrates, whose unvaried countenance I experienced, entirely ceased—the rates were considerably diminished—the labourers depended more upon themselves and were generally better off—and what was most important, new principles were gaining ground.

The amount of money paid to the Poor during the years of my occasional superintendance, exclusive of the maintenance of those in the workhouse and of the expense of a few articles of clothing, was as follows :

	£	s.	d.
From March 1817 to March 1818	812	16	6
1818	1819	537	19 7½
1819	1820	489	12 6
1820	1821	368	4 0

When I first interfered in August 1817, it was the practice to admit families into the workhouse ; at the time my interference ceased, the number of inmates was reduced to eight, viz. six aged persons and two young women—one of the latter half ideotic, and the other labouring under severe disease. Three of the old men broke stones for the roads, and the ideotic girl maintained herself. In fact a workhouse was

become quite unnecessary. Before the commencement of the alteration of system the expenses of pauperism were rapidly increasing, and the reduction was solely owing to that species of amendment in management, which may be put in practice under any circumstances.

In corroboration of the above statement a letter will be found in the Appendix, No. I. This letter, it will be observed, is dated six years after the commencement of my interference—the effects of which still continue, though latterly I believe some degree of neglect has crept in.

Having subsequently to my first experiment, availed myself of other opportunities of acquiring practical information on the subject of pauperism, I am induced to submit the following Observations to the Public, in the sincere desire to contribute every thing in my power towards effecting the removal of this heavy drawback upon the national energies. We live in enlightened times, we have numerous institutions capable of producing, if systematically organised, a general moral advancement; and so convinced am I, from long and intimate personal knowledge, of the cruel and debasing effects of the Poor Laws, that, were there no alternative between their instant abolition and permanent continuance, I should unhesitatingly pronounce the former to



be a signal act of mercy. Let any one look at the pauperised population in the remoter parts of some even of the most fertile districts in England. There are to be seen pale and liny countenances, faded eyes, shrunk limbs, and expedients for clothes, making up an appearance of misery and depression, which is little exceeded in the most sterile Cantons of Switzerland, or under the worst governments of Italy. In those countries comparison scarcely embitters endurance; but here the sweets of liberty and affluence constantly present themselves, yet are hopelessly unattainable. A weekly pittance from the parish is the sole expected reward of a life of labour and privation—and its end a cheerless old age of aching infirmity. In populous towns the picture is yet more sickening. The privations are more severe; the capability of bearing them less; existence is more isolated, comparison more galling—the blessings of nature are excluded, and life languishes amidst every thing that is loathsome to the senses, and debasing to the mind.

§ 1. PAUPERISM, in the legal sense of the word, is a state of dependence upon parochial provision. That provision, so far as it is necessary to supply the demand for labour, is a tax upon wages; beyond that amount, it is a tax upon

property, and operates as a bounty to improvidence. Where labourers, with an ordinary degree of prudence, cannot maintain themselves and their families without parochial relief, such relief is part of their own wages, kept back to be doled out to them as emergency requires. The feigning, or unnecessarily bringing on such emergency, demands an increase of the provision, which increase falls on the property assessed to the rates. Of the large sum annually raised for the purposes of pauperism, that part only is a tax upon property, which is absorbed by the bounty to improvidence and by the expenses of the system—the remainder is merely a tax upon wages, and has this double injustice in it. It is neither refunded in the proportions in which it is retained, nor distributed in the proportions in which it is deducted. It is retained in the proportion of employment of labour; it is refunded in that of property assessed. It is deducted from the best labourers in a larger proportion than from the worst—it is distributed to the worst in a larger proportion than to the best. The injustice with regard to property is too evident to need explanation; that which regards the labourer may be shown thus. In any place where wages are not sufficient to keep up the supply of labour, it is necessary either to raise

them till they are so, or to make up the difference from the parish. Suppose the wages to be 10s. a week, and that it would require 12s. to keep up the supply of labour. If wages are raised, the best labourers will receive the most benefit; but if the difference is made up by the parish, the best labourers will pay, and the worst will receive the greatest part of the tax. Those who work their whole time, will pay 2s. a week, or 5*l.* 4s. per ann., of which they may possibly receive little or nothing in return; and according to this scale, a healthy, industrious labourer may lose in the course of his life above 200*l.* To put the case in another way: if the price of the aggregate of labour in a parish be 1000*l.* per ann., whereof 800*l.* are paid in wages, and 200*l.*, which is one-fifth, or twenty per cent. on the whole, are paid as rates, the labourer, who ought to have received 10s. a week, will only receive 8s. It may be said, these instances only prove that the effect of the Poor Laws is to establish a benefit society in every parish. But in benefit societies, the tax is voluntary and equal, or fairly proportioned, and is managed by the contributors themselves; and with all their precautions, there is this acknowledged objection, that the worst members generally receive the most advantage. But where wages are

taxed by the parish, the tax is neither voluntary nor equal but most unfairly proportioned ; nor have the contributors any controul over the distribution, but are made to apply for their own as if they were depending upon others. The attempt to keep down the price of labour, by reserving a fund for those who have the greatest calls, is certainly specious in appearance ; but in reality, has invariably the effect of encreasing those calls beyond the capability of the fund to answer, and therefore the price of labour is enhanced instead of being reduced. To tax unmarried labourers for the benefit of the married, soon increases marriages, so as to make the tax insufficient ; and the more it is raised, the greater is the insufficiency, and consequently greater the demand upon some other fund.

In the above cases no abuse is supposed, but merely the common degrees of superiority and good fortune ; and even then, if any man be stronger, more healthy, industrious, or skilful than another, or choose to defer the expenses of a family till later in life, he has a right to profit accordingly, and ought not to be taxed for the benefit of those whose prudence or good fortune are less than his own. But in practice, the abuses from improvidence and imposition render the argument much stronger. Suppose there to

be a parish, in which there is no surplus population, and no poors' rates—consequently there will be full employment for every one at fair wages. Suppose two or three families to be moved there under orders of settlement—a rate would then become necessary, and being beyond what is sufficient to keep up the supply of labour, it would be a tax upon property. Suppose the pauper families to increase to such an extent as to create a considerable surplus population, the inevitable consequence would be to diminish the rate of wages; and the former labourers must either lower their habits, or marriages amongst them must become less frequent. In either case, that part of their wages which had been deducted, would be paid to make up the deficient supply of labour—because, if they preserved their habits, there would be fewer of them, and if they became pauperised, they would do less work. There can be no medium: wages cannot be permanently higher than is necessary to supply the demand for labour, respect being had to the habits generated by the progress of civilization. In the above instance therefore, labour may be taken to have been produced at the cheapest rate, and any deduction of wages must cause a diminution of its quantity; to supply which the amount of the deduction and some-

thing more will be required, and the bounty to improvidence, as before stated, remains wholly a tax upon property. Where the population is increasing beyond the demand for labour, there is naturally an objection to provide accommodation for it, and consequently, cottage rents begin to rise, especially where the pernicious practice of paying them by the parish prevails; so that the prudent part of the population is affected by pauperism in three ways—as it tends to make employment scarce, to lower wages, and to raise house rent. Under these discouraging circumstances, the independent labourers cannot all escape infection, and those who do escape, succeed in spite of the system, and not without seriously suffering from it. Hence it is clear, that it is the interest of the sound part of the community, whether high or low, to make every possible opposition to pauperism, and to whatever produces it.

§ 2. It is probable, that in general the poors' rates are compounded of the tax upon wages, and the tax upon property, though in different parts of the country, the proportion must greatly vary. So far as the labourer's wages are taxed, his claim is to his own—beyond to the property of others. But both taxes being raised and paid in the same way, and under the same name, and

there being in general a very confused conception of the difference, and the limits not being easily distinguishable, and the distribution being made under the same circumstances of degradation, and upon the same supposition of incapacity for self-dependence, the two claims run so much into one another, and are made in spirit so much one, that pauperism and improvidence may be used convertibly, not only with safety, but so as to make the subject much more easily comprehensible; and if the laws for the "Maintenance of the Poor," had been called Laws for the Maintenance of the Improvident, much confusion in estimating their effects would have been avoided. If men could be made, with trifling allowances for human frailty, sufficiently prudent to take care of themselves and their families, there would be no pretence for Poor Laws. It is the principle of those laws, however disguised, to suppose improvidence incurable; it is their effect to contribute to make it so. Pauperism and poverty, pauper and poor man, are terms often used indiscriminately, from which ensue much confusion and injustice. Poverty, in its simple sense, signifies a deficiency of means: pauperism is a mode of poverty, of which improvidence is the essence. I speak now of pauperism, with reference to its ordinary current, exclusive of

those occasional overflowings, which subside with the causes that produce them. No individuals, however poor, *if they have been careful in all other respects*, need depend upon the parish for relief. Sympathy is too strong, and the funds of private charity are too ample to admit a contrary supposition; nor indeed, to a man capable of labour, does the 43d of Elizabeth contemplate under any circumstances such a necessity. With respect to that celebrated statute, the leading one on the subject, it would have been difficult, *à priori*, to have shown its defects, or even to have withheld that approbation, which till latterly has been universally bestowed upon it. But the principle is assuredly erroneous: it is the admission of a MORAL PESTILENCE, to which it is in vain to say—"thus far only shalt thou go." It never has been—it cannot be confined to infancy, age, or infirmity; to morbid subjects, or to obscure quarters—it attacks and paralyses the young and the vigorous—it seizes whole families—it becomes hereditary—it pervades the city and the fields—it is found in the most flourishing, as well as in the poorest districts, and, as long as it is permitted to infest the land, it will have its periods of devastating violence. The limitations of the statute, with great semblance of wisdom and



humanity, being impossible in practice, it has from the first been extolled and departed from, appealed to, and misunderstood. It presumes no barrier or interval between labour and dependence, and interposing merely a line, guarded by a few inefficient sentinels, it invites all to approach, in the expectation that only the few it has designated will be able to pass over. It is founded upon too low an estimate of human prudence; it supposes the labourer "a beast, that wants discourse of reason;" and when he is incapable of labour, with a show of compassion, it turns him, like a worn-out horse upon the parish common, to subsist on its bareness till he dies. Let this comparison be pursued: suppose a common to be by law provided in every parish, with a power of enlarging it as occasion may require, for the maintenance of horses permanently incapable of labour—would that remain the limit? Would not horses temporarily incapable from sickness, lameness or whatever cause, be gradually sent and admitted? Would not the privilege be extended to those not arrived at the period of labour? Would not the parish from time to time be taxed to throw down enclosures, and increase the common? Would it not be the interest of those who had many horses and little land, to promote such a mea-

sure? Would not the grossest abuses creep in, from negligence and interest? Would not all this necessarily produce an overstock of sorry, ill-trained animals, continually breaking into private lands, and doing comparatively little work and much damage? And would they not aggravate scarcity and engender disease? The 43d of Elizabeth is precisely similar in its nature, and has produced precisely similar results. It limited relief to the old and the impotent, but it has been extended to all ages and all capacities. Neglect and imposition have crept in; private funds have been grievously taxed, to increase the common one; the interests of a few have co-operated; an overstock of sorry, ill-trained animals has been continued or increased, who are continually invading private property, committing crimes, comparatively working little, aggravating scarcity, and engendering disease. The statute supposes no fund but labour, and the very moment that fails from inability, it holds out a provision. The transition from inability to perform, to inability to procure, is easy; and partial failure from either cause of course is held entitled to relief in proportion. A rate of subsistence becomes recognised, and that failing, the parish must make up the difference—consequently claims arising from inade-

quate remuneration or extraordinary demands, cannot be excluded. What temptations to improvidence and imposition are here held out! What encouragement to over population! What a disturbance of the natural rate of wages! The industrious labourer is robbed of his own, which he can only recover by joining the band, who are engaged in robbing others. The spoil is all confounded together, and it is who shall carry away the most.

The Poor Laws did not cause improvidence—it raged always. If they were abrogated, it would not *therefore* cease: that depends upon improvements in the institutions and habits of society; and in the same way that plague and ague have been made to disappear, so may pauperism. But the Poor Laws, in principle, only attempt to limit the evil, and argument and the experience of two centuries show, that in practice they serve to increase it; whilst their specious appearance, through constant and admitted abuse, has diverted the energies of the state and of individuals from enforcing, and the inclinations of the people from adopting the practicable means of amelioration that have from time to time been devised.

§ 3. The worst effect of the Poor Laws is the extension of habits of deceit and self-debasement.

This evil sometimes rises to such a pitch as virulently to affect the whole labouring population of large districts—even those highly favoured. In looking through the country, when we see that prosperity and well-being are seldom in proportion to advantages natural or accidental, and often the reverse, we may safely conclude there are some defects of system ; and it is idle to suppose it not possible to discover the remedies, but to be content with applying such unstatesmanlike expedients as gaols, work-houses, or penitentiaries. Can it for a moment be presumed, that the quantity of pauperism and crime existing in England, is merely the aggregate of cases of uncontrollable human frailty, and of those arising from abuse of the best principles that can be put in operation ; and if it be more, can it be maintained that any trouble or expense incurred in promoting a general advance, will not be amply repaid ? Individual instances of demoralization, varying in number and degree according to local circumstances, will be found every where ; to such the parish fund affords never failing facilities ; after them follow the unstable in well-doing, whom a little encouragement would lead either way—their example and persuasion draw in the next in degree ; a surplus and deteriorated popula-

tion is the consequence; then a scarcity of employment and fall of wages; then a further increase of rates; and in proportion as other causes co-operate the derangement becomes overwhelming. It is true the labouring classes might avoid these evils; but it is more than can be expected from human nature that there should be such a result—where there is, it arises from favourable circumstances which overpower the constant tendency of the Poor Laws. These laws are founded upon a dangerous error in legislation, that of providing for the exceptions at the expense of the rule. In this case the rule is: *That every man should provide for himself*, and if the state were careful, on the one hand not to throw impediments in the way of self-dependence, and on the other to afford every practicable encouragement to it, the exceptions would never be felt—as it is, in many places they have become the rule.

The extent to which deceit and self-debasement enter into the composition of pauperism is quite inconceivable, except to those who have, as it were, anatomized the subject. The whole life of a pauper is a lie—his whole study imposition; he lives by appearing not to be able to live; he will throw himself out of work, aggravate disease, get into debt, live in wretchedness, perse-

vere in the most irksome applications, nay bring upon himself the incumbrance of a family, for no other purpose than to get his share from the parish. It is his constant aim to make every thing he has of as little value as possible; and he is consequently often obliged to throw away advantages, and to use those he keeps so as to be of little comfort to him. He necessarily becomes what he feigns to be, and drags after him, without remorse, his family and all within his influence. Such is the operation of the Poor Laws, that deceit and self-debasement, in various degrees, may be taken to be of the very essence of pauperism. Pique and spite are frequent causes of it, and are generally the worst cases to deal with; but deceit and debasement are the means necessarily used to succeed. I have known a man who earned a guinea a week, because his brother could earn more, keep himself out of work for eight months with occasional intervals, and during the time starve himself and his family on 8s. a week from the parish, which he contrived to get by various impositions, and persevering application. I knew another with a wife and family, who could earn 16s. a week at out-door work, but because a fellow-workman received 18s. he went to weaving, at which he could only earn 10s., and got

2s. more from the parish. I have known cases of men procuring themselves and their families to be turned out of their houses, in order to compel the parish to find them residences, though they well knew they should suffer by the change. I knew a case of a woman, who having heard that a neighbour had had some shoes given to her children by the parish, swore she would have some too, and being refused, set off to the magistrate in a borrowed costume of misery, with all her children in rags, and before she arrived concealed their shoes behind a hedge. Having told her tale of woe and oppression, and finally succeeded, she sold the parish shoes the next day for half their value, and squandered the money. Instances like the above, though of common occurrence, will generally escape detection, or, if the imposition is stated, it will hardly be credited—especially against the solemn and artful asseverations of the paupers themselves, who, having once made an application, it is a point of honour amongst them not to be foiled; as it is to get as much as others, who are in any thing like similar circumstances. Besides, they will designedly plunge themselves so deeply into distress, that there is no alternative but to help them out. I have frequently heard paupers use this phrase: “I

will throw myself upon you, and then you *must* relieve me."

In almost all cases, paupers have more than they choose to state, and perhaps, from the way in which they receive it, more than they are aware of. I knew the case of a labourer who called his earnings 8s. 6d. a week, and on that statement had his rent partly paid by the parish; yet it was afterwards proved that he had advantages equal to more than 20s. a week. He must have known that he had more than he said, but he certainly was not aware to what extent; and the appearance of himself and his family, and their apparent mode of living, were in conformity to the sum he gave in. Mismanagement is a necessary art with paupers, and they are at such pains to conceal their real state from others, that they very rarely know it themselves. I have never been able to make out, even where wages were the lowest, that a labourer in full work, reckoning all his advantages the year round, received what is worth less than 10s. a week; and reckoning what is given him, and what he purloins, which, where wages are the lowest, is an universal practice, 12s. would perhaps not be too high an estimate. I have found, upon examination, that the difference between 3s. a day, regular



wages, and 1s. is not nearly so great as is generally supposed. In the first case, the wages are all that is received ; in the second perhaps about half, and living generally much cheaper. But in the first case the labourer knows exactly what he has to receive. He can take his money to the best market, and has no need of concealment. He can live comfortably, and save enough to tempt him to accumulate. In the second case, the labourer has only 6s. a week at his command ; the rest comes at odd times, often he cannot calculate when, and is generally anticipated. Part of his gains he receives to keep him out of distress, and part to get him out, but none to keep him above it. He cannot save without suffering privation, and what he could save appears too inconsiderable to be worth his attention. He finds he shall not be better able to maintain a family at any future period than at the present, and he sees that, with a view to ease the poor's rates, married men obtain employment in preference to single ones. Thus low wages make the labourer improvident, and his improvidence makes him unfit to have them raised. Where wages rise without a corresponding advance in habits, that also necessarily increases improvidence, so that great fluctuations have a doubly bad effect. That alone is a healthy state,

where habits advance and wages follow, till the whole cost of labour is comprised in the wages of labour; and then will labour be the cheapest, and the labourer entirely paid by the employer.

§ 4. In order to exhibit pauperism in its strongest colours, suppose an extensive and fertile parish with an unusual number of wealthy residents, with large woods, much game, a facility of smuggling, two or three commons, several alms houses, endowments for distributing bread and clothes, and much private charity; and suppose the rich to take no farther concern in parochial affairs, than alternately to grumble at the amount of a rate or the harshness of an overseer, as application is made to them for their money or for their protection. Under such circumstances, the spirit of pauperism will be at its height; and yet people who should know better, will be found to hold such language as this: "I don't know how it is the rates in this parish are so high; we are particularly well off for provision for the poor; there are alms houses, and regular distributions of food and clothes; they have all common-rights, at least they all take them; they pick up fuel for nothing—I am sure they are never out of my woods; they smuggle almost every thing they want; and then private charity is really quite

unbounded ; and yet I can't say I see much gratitude in return ; the damage done to property is immense, and the expense and vexation about game completely destroy all the pleasure of it. I often wish I had not a bird or a hare on my estate. Really it is in vain to do any thing for the poor ; indeed, I think the more pains one takes, the worse they are. Lord —— gave them an ox to roast last King's birthday, and they absolutely pulled down his park paling to make the fire."\* For poverty put pauperism, and for charity indiscretion, and all will be explained. Giving to pauperism is only " spreading the compost on the weeds to make them ranker."

It is of the utmost importance accurately to distinguish between poverty and pauperism ; for by confounding them, poverty is dishonoured, and pauperism countenanced. Supply poverty with means and it vanishes, but pauperism is the more confirmed. Poverty is a sound vessel empty, but pauperism is not only empty but cracked. Poverty is a natural appetite, merely wanting food—pauperism a ravenous atrophy, which no food can satisfy. Poverty strives to cure itself—pauperism to contaminate others. Poverty often stimulates to exertion—pauperism

\* This actually happened a few years since.

always paralyzes. Poverty is sincere—pauperism is an arch-hypocrite. Poverty has naturally a proud spirit—pauperism a base one, now servile, now insolent. Poverty is silent and retiring—pauperism clamorous and imposing; the one grateful, the other the reverse. There is much that is alluring in poverty, but pauperism is altogether hateful. It is delightful to succour the one, and irksome to be taxed for the other. Poverty has the blessing of Heaven as well as those who relieve it—pauperism, on the contrary, has nothing in common with the Christian virtues. St. Paul has described the spirit of pauperism, and given his decided opinion upon it. “ *Neither did we eat any man’s bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you, to make ourselves an example unto you to follow us. For even when we were with you, this we commanded—that if any would not work neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busy bodies. Now those that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.*” Indeed the injunctions of Christianity are wholly in opposition to the spirit of

pauperism ; and the merit of those institutions which serve to encourage, and of those individuals who thoughtlessly succour it, may be estimated accordingly.

In such a parish as that above described, the ample fund capable of being raised, and, from its supposed management, necessarily abused, would alone induce an over population, and the charitable endowments and private largesses would powerfully contribute to the same end ; besides which are to be taken into the account the pauperized habits produced by poaching, smuggling, and gathering fuel, and by the barbarizing privileges of common-rights. Encrease the supposed advantages of such a place, and pauperism will encrease in the same or in a greater proportion. How vain from such a population to expect gratitude for favours, or respect for property ! *Do men gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles ?* Idle and lawless habits and abandoned principles, can be the only fruits. They alone are in their hearts grateful for assistance, who are really striving for themselves—the traveller fainting on his journey, and not the beggar by the way-side.

There are certain pauper maxims which would be familiar to such a population. “ We’ll stick to our rights—there’s no use in slaving. There

must be some poor, or what is the parish made for? There is land enough; the parish can afford; it's hard if a poor man may'nt pick up a few sticks to keep his family from perishing. Poaching's no robbery; game is not property." I once heard a canting old woman of eighty, who levied large contributions from the affluent, on having in vain tried all her arts to prevent a reduction of her parish pay, exclaim with great vehemence, "Half the land's ours, and by G--d we'll have it." Can it be wondered that such doctrines are held, or that they produce such results?

§ 5. Nothing can well be more specious than the provisions of the 43d of Elizabeth. It imposes an equitable tax upon the inhabitants of every parish: 1st. "For setting to work or apprenticing the children of such parents as shall not be thought able to maintain them." 2dly. "For setting to work all persons having no means, and using no ordinary or daily trade to get their living by." And 3dly. For supplying "the necessary relief to the lame, impotent, old, blind, and such others as are not able to work." The first provision was intended as a moral preventive, the second as a moral corrective, and the third as a charitable regulation. The two first provisions, being compulsory and

restrictive, cannot be carried into execution without the consent of two magistrates, which is also necessary for fixing the amount of the rates—in one case to protect the liberty of the poor; in the other the property of the rich; but, (what will appear strange to many,) magisterial interference, with respect to ordering relief, is in no way authorized by this statute—the distribution of the tax to distressed objects being left entirely to the discretion of officers, chosen by those who pay it. All this looks beautiful, but within is false and hollow. As an intermediate measure, indeed, it might have been expedient, but as a principle, it is, as before observed, founded upon too low an estimate of human prudence. It is like providing for children, as if they were never to be men—a course which we see very seldom fails to produce a vicious state of helplessness. The mind must ever be at work, and if legitimate exercise is rendered unnecessary, it will, as a rule, take an opposite direction, “to vice industrious, but to nobler deeds timorous and slothful,”—which is as accurate a description of pauperism, as can possibly be given. To the welfare of beings capable of thought it is indispensable that the present should be regulated with a view to the future. Undoubtedly it is the general opi-

nion, that the labouring classes, as a body, are not capable of taking care of themselves. If they are not, they cannot be capable of comprehending the dictates of religion; for who can possibly be able to provide for a future life, who is not able to understand the duties of this? But to what class was Christianity first and principally addressed? For whom are its precepts peculiarly adapted? The Poor Laws indeed say to the labourer, you need not be provident. You need take no thought either for yourselves or your children. But what does Christianity say? St. Paul, speaking not of the rich but of the poor, declares, “*If any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.*” Immediately after, he states to whom the voluntary contributions of the charitable ought to be distributed. “*Let not a widow be taken into the number under three score years old, well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints’ feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work.*” Then follow these words, “*But the younger widows, refuse; they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only*



*idle, but tattlers also and busy bodies, speaking things which they ought not.*" Whoever is conversant with pauperism, will recognize in this last passage, a very faithful description of it. Where I am now writing, in a fertile but pauperized district, the labourers' wives make it a point, whatever they neglect or lose, or however little business they have, to go regularly to market, and there remain the whole day. Indeed I have no doubt but that many are induced to apply for relief in a great degree for the pleasure of joining the gossiping assemblage on the same errand. I have known cases of women applying without their husband's knowledge, and certainly it frequently happens, that the men become paupers at the pressing instance of their wives.

It must be allowed that the Poor Laws, in their present extent, have a very unchristian tendency. The 43d of Elizabeth is in degree less objectionable, *but to its principle may be traced all succeeding abuse*, and its provisions, when separately examined, will be found, in seeming only, good. The first, which is for taking away the children of parents unable to maintain them, was evidently intended merely to prevent such children from being confirmed in improper habits, and not at all by way of relief

to the parents. This appears from the circumstance, that the children are left without relief till they are capable of being set to work, or of being apprenticed, and that the consent of two magistrates is necessary to take them away. Certainly it may sometimes be right to remove children from their parents, but it must be wrong to provide for such cases before-hand. It is making a municipal law in contravention of a law of nature, and is a strong instance of weakening a rule by providing for the exceptions; indeed in many places the children of the labourers are now, as a matter of course, apprenticed by the parish, and the exceptions are reversed. But the evil did not stop here. First the overseer would put the law in force to remove the children from their parents; then parents would apply to have their children removed; then stronger cases for relief would arise, where children were not old enough to be apprenticed; till at last grew up the present ruinous and demoralizing practice of making an allowance for every child above a certain number. The second provision, for enabling the overseer to set the idle to work, goes beyond the province of law, by trying directly to enforce a moral obligation. All that the law can do is, on the one hand to afford facility to industry,

and on the other, to punish the offences consequent to idleness. This attempt to make men industrious by law, has long been found impracticable; but the abuses arising from it are in full force. It was a natural consequence, that a man in any little difficulty real or pretended, should say to the overseer, "If I were unwilling to work you would compel me—now I am willing, but I cannot find work." How could such applications be refused, till experience had proved the monstrous evils resulting from the system? The original enactment empowers the overseer with the consent of two magistrates to compel the idle to work; the idle now, by an order from one magistrate, compel the overseer to supply them with money. This state of things destroys the healthy proportion between the demand for labour and the supply, and is mainly preventive of that moral elasticity which prompts individuals to aim at independence. The third provision for relieving the helpless, in principle, turns a moral affection into a legal obligation, and forces the gentle dew of charity into a poisoned stream. Undoubtedly nothing is more salutary than the exercise of discreet benevolence; but here benevolence loses its nature, and discretion yields to necessity. The overseer can make no distinctions like St. Paul. If the

distress be there, however brought on, he must relieve it. The most that is granted is "the necessary relief," and consequently that provision in the Select Vestry Act, which authorizes the vestry "to distinguish between the deserving and the idle, extravagant, or profligate poor," is found in practice to be completely nugatory. The error consists in systematically providing for destitution, instead of endeavouring systematically to prevent it, and leaving the accidental cases to accidental succour. When this last provision is compounded of the tax upon wages and the tax upon property, it unites the evils of a Benefit Society upon the worst principle with those of constrained charity. It might seem obvious that there is no state, for which there is so little pretence for legislative provision, as for that of old age, seeing that there is none for which there is so much time and warning to prepare; and for all other cases of helplessness, not wilfully brought on, it is certainly contrary to experience to suppose compulsory assistance necessary.

§ 6. If there were no Poors' Rates, but more prudence, and wages were sufficiently high to enable the labourer to provide for old age and to bring up decently the average number of children, allowing for ordinary casualties, then

where there were more than the average number of children, or extraordinary casualties, the resources would be a certain degree of privation, and beyond that, the voluntary assistance of those around. Where there is general comfort, a few cases of poverty (not pauperism) so far from being considered burdensome, are not only cheerfully but eagerly relieved. These are the legitimate objects of charity, and as they excite the kindly affections, and repay them with gratitude, they tend to increase the general stock of virtue and happiness. But the Poor Laws, by serving to debase the one class, and to make the other believe such debasement inevitable, greatly retard any material improvement. They keep up a race of paupers even under the most favourable circumstances. There is at least a skeleton regiment in every parish; a few gin-drinking, canting old women, two or three dissolute fellows, with a show of infirmity to excuse them from work—a half-knave, half-fool, with his attendant train of ragged urchins—besides, sundry loose characters, who alternately enlist and desert, as the humour takes them, and the times permit. This corps, ever ready on emergency to be filled to its complement, is kept constantly exercised in a predatory warfare on the squire's game, the farmer's fences, his wife's poultry,

and every petty pillageable article ; for which services, besides their regular pay, they obtain contributions from the poor, and pensions from the rich. Every Monday morning, old Betty Tomkins sets off to receive her shilling at the Vicarage, and toddles home with her pockets full of oddments, and her apron full of sticks, invoking the Lord to bless every one she meets. Lamé Nathan occasionally hobbles his rounds amongst the little farmers, to pick up his dinner, and any thing else he can lay his hands upon, with the character of being “ a willing fellow, if he could but work.” For the better maintenance of this corps, perhaps an establishment is kept up—a barrack-master and surgeon—then stores are to be laid in, and petty interests are created at the expense of the general. It is the nature of pauperism to infect ; it is the study of paupers to make converts. Experience teaches them that it is the tendency of numbers to increase their pay, and decrease their degradation. By numbers they overawe and tire out those, whose interest it is to controul them : by numbers they diminish the examples of independent exertion. They are consequently assiduous in every art of recruiting their ranks, and preventing desertion. *It is little known by what persuasion, threats, derision, and intrigue, many*

*healthy spirits are corrupted, and how many by the same means are prevented from emancipating themselves.* As long as there is a permanent fund, it will be so. Temporary efforts may produce temporary reductions, but it is system against the want of it. The greater part of the population is kept too near the verge of pauperism, with unsettled habits and downward looks. Their thoughts are so habituated to what is low, that any partial scheme for their improvement, advances slowly, is eyed with suspicion, and generally ends in decay; and it may be laid down as a maxim, that in every political institution, the tendency of which is to induce other than self-dependence, abuse is unavoidable, and that if it were not, still the results could never be beneficial.

§ 7. In populous towns and manufacturing districts, where the fluctuations in wages are greater than in the country, as well as the numbers affected, it may seem at first sight that parochial provision is indispensable; but in fact, that provision mainly contributes to cause the fluctuations. In ordinary times, there constantly exists a surplus population; for it cannot be doubted, but that the working classes might be more prudent and industrious, and consequently that a smaller number would be sufficient to perform

the labour required. The lowest in degree are always in a partial state of pauperism, and the greater portion of the remainder upon the verge of it. If from any cause the value of labour materially decreases, there is no resource but the parish, and production is continued with the aid of that artificial support; so that wages are forced lower and lower; and when the demand for labour would naturally have returned to its former standard, it is prevented by the extra production; and the industrious and prudent labourer is for some time deprived of the benefit he ought to have received. When the demand for labour falls below the average, the improvident part of the working classes are the most turbulent and clamorous, and the readiest tools in the hands of the factious and designing. When the demand for labour rises above the average, they become, in the proportion that wages advance, idle, dissolute, and difficult to manage. The fruits of improvidence, when soured by bad seasons, are riot and sedition; when ripened by prosperity, extravagance, profligacy, and combination. If the working classes were to become as prudent as they have hitherto been the reverse, many of them would render themselves quite independent of labour, and almost all partially so—then, when the demand



for labour should fall below the average, they would keep withdrawing in proportion to their means, till the demand returned to its former standard. If it rose above the average, those who had become independent, would return to labour or would remain at it, as the additional remuneration tempted them, till the extra demand ceased, or if permanent, till it was met by increased population; and this is the state, in which labour would be the cheapest and most satisfactory.

Though a provident population must have more resources than an improvident one, yet it will be much more difficult to form or keep up combinations amongst them. The interest of each individual is more distinct, and therefore not so easily drawn into the mass—every man is calculating his own gradual advance, and will not readily make a certain sacrifice for an uncertain benefit—he is in a state of progressive comfort, from which it is difficult to disturb him, and his prudence and constant occupation make him little liable to become the dupe of the designing. The life of the improvident, on the contrary, is an alternation of privation and indulgence, and they are ever ready to undergo the former, for the chance of the latter; they listen, and become a prey to the plausible

and artful, to whose designs uneasiness and credulity constantly expose them. They have no fixed purpose or ultimate aim to keep them steady, and their individual interest being worth little to them, they are very willing to throw it into the general, and make common cause with those who have as little to lose as themselves. A prudent population is the best calculated to resist unjustifiable aggression, and an improvident one to commence it.

The Poor Laws originally had, comparatively speaking, only to provide for individual cases of pauperism—now occasionally for immense masses. Their tendency to keep the operatives of populous districts so near the verge of pauperism, has the following effects: when the demand for labour is small, distress is great, and the pressure on the rates heavy—when the demand increases, industry becomes general, till the ordinary wants of the labouring classes, according to their low standard, are tolerably supplied, and then idleness and extravagance commence. The quantity of labour performed, in proportion to numbers, keeps decreasing, as the demand for it rises; the surplus population, every where more or less existing, is drawn progressively towards the places where the demand for labour is the greatest, whilst

what is taken away is speedily in a course of being more than supplied. Speculation begins to rage, idleness increases, numbers make up the difference, a glut ensues, speculators are ruined, production stops, confidence is destroyed, complete stagnation follows. The labourers have provided no resources, but fall back upon that provision which they have always had their eyes upon; the claimants are so much increased, that other funds are obliged to be called in aid, till distress has somewhat reduced population, and there has been time to consume the over production, and then in a few years the same destructive course comes round again. This state of things is equally pernicious to the employer and employed; it favours speculation in the one, and debasement in the other, to the ruin of both. If the labouring classes were in a considerably higher state of advancement, the results would be very different: the profits of trade and the wages of labour would be more regular. When the demand for labour increased, it would be more slowly supplied, and of course would be more permanent. When it diminished, a portion of the labourers would retreat upon their own resources. An increased demand for labour would only be met by the increased industry of those already engaged, by the return of those

who had retired; by the comparatively scanty supply to be drawn from a distance, and by the slow progress of increased population—a diminished demand would be met by the increased resources of the labouring class. Fluctuations could scarcely be considerable, or productive of any great inconvenience; commerce would proceed less by fits and starts, and speculation would give way to a more regular and healthy system. As the same moral advance took place in other parts of the world, the effects would be more and more beneficial.

To illustrate the above positions by examples—Suppose in any manufacturing district a week's labour to be worth 18s. and half the workmen to be idle on an average two days in a week; and suppose a week's labour to fall in price to 12s., then the whole number of workmen would be willing to work their full time; and a supply of labour to the amount of one-fifth would be added; for half the workmen worked six days, and half four days, which are equal to ten days; and two days added, are one-fifth; so that, if there were 10,000 workmen, the additional supply would be equal to that of 2,000 pair of hands, and this on a declining market. This competition on the part of the workmen lowers wages still more; the poor's rates are resorted to; speculators

avail themselves of the depression of wages to lay in stocks\*—as their stocks increase, wages necessarily fall and rates rise; if no improvement takes place, speculation at last stops, and wages reach the lowest point of depression—the rates become insufficient—subscriptions are entered into and parliamentary aid granted, and riot and misery continue till revived demand has carried off the large stock on hand. Suppose, on the other hand, wages rise from 18s. a week to 24s. and that half the number of workmen then become idle on an average three days a week, the amount of labour would be diminished by one-tenth, or to the amount of 1000 pair of hands; and that when the demand is increasing. To meet the exigency, and to give scope to unlimited speculation, workmen are brought from the surplus population of all parts in as great numbers as can be procured, and when a glut comes, as come it must, distress follows quicker, and is more overwhelming than before.

To those well acquainted with the manufacturing districts, the expressions, “There’s plenty of work to be had, but one can’t get a living out of

\* After this was in the press, I observed the following extract from the Glasgow Chronicle, in the Morning Herald of April 19th. “Though there is no improvement in the demand for goods, the low price of yarn and the diminution in wages have induced some of the steam-loom factories, which had partially stopped working, to resume at full time; and the same motives have, in some small degree, lessened the inactivity of hand-weaving.”

it ;” and, “Those were rare times—a man didn’t know what to do with his money then”—must be quite familiar. Both expressions imply an improvident population. In the first case, the labourer is forced by his poverty to work for whatever he can get, and in the second, he is inevitably preparing for that state, by not husbanding his means. I have heard of an operative cotton spinner, who had long been earning by himself and his family five guineas a week, applying to the parish for relief after only a fortnight’s incapacity from typhus fever. This class of men, except the few who think of setting up for themselves, spend what should be their savings in sensual indulgence ; they purchase the earliest dainties of the season, and the most expensive articles of food, and from their way of living, combined with the nature of their employment, they generally become dependent long before the usual period of inability to work.

Now, suppose a superior class of workmen, fewer in number, but more industrious and saving ; suppose a week’s labour to be worth as before, 18s. and all working their whole time. Suppose wages to fall to 12s., then, so far from there being an increased supply of labour as the demand diminished, the supply would decrease in proportion as the workmen were able to retire upon their own resources, and would adjust

itself very probably so nearly to the actual demand, as to produce almost an immediate benefit as soon as there should be a turn in the market. If wages should rise from 18s. a week to 24s., so far from the supply of labour being diminished, the greater remuneration would cause an increased activity in the actual workmen, and would draw many who had retired, back to their former employments. Supposing there to be none, or but little surplus population in other parts, the supply of labour from a distance, of course, must be small; and the demand would remain in full force for the benefit of the industrious and prudent. If at length any check happened, increased resources would render it of comparatively little consequence, and of short duration. Under such circumstances trade would become less a lottery than at present. Fortunes would be less rapidly gained, and more seldom lost; and the prudent and industrious, whether employer or employed, would have more certain prospects of gradual success.

The difference between a provident and an improvident labouring population in ordinary, in bad, and in good times, may also be illustrated in the following way; observing, that as these illustrations are only meant to apply to the principle, the numbers are assumed more for convenience than for any particular reference to the

variations in practice. In ordinary times, suppose a day's work to be worth 3*s.*, and 10,000 men to work on an average five days each week—their labour would be equal to that of one man for 50,000 days, and they could earn on an average 15*s.* a week each; but it would require only 8,333 men, working six days each week, to perform the same quantity of labour, and they would earn 18*s.* a week each. Suppose the value of a day's work to fall to 2*s.* and the 10,000 men to work their whole time; their labour would then be equal to that of one man for 60,000 days, and they would earn 12*s.* a week each; but if a sufficient number of the 8,333 men withdrew to reduce their labour to an average of four days in the week, their labour would only be equal to that of one man for 33,333 days, and the value would be to be divided according to the number who remained. Lastly, suppose the value of a day's labour to rise to 4*s.*, and the 10,000 men to work on an average not more than four days in each week, their labour would only be equal to that of one man for 40,000 days, and they would earn on an average 16*s.* a week; but if the 8,333 men, stimulated by the additional remuneration, were to perform what should be equal to one day's labour more in a week each, their labour would be equal to that of one man for 58,333 days, and



they would earn 28s. a week each. In the above case, when the demand for labour is diminished, the improvident population offers nearly double the quantity of labour that the provident population offers, or in the proportion of 60,000 to 33,333; and when the demand for labour is increased, the case is reversed in the proportion of 58,333 to 40,000. So that in the latter case, there is a deficiency on the part of the improvident population of 18,333 days work per week, which at four days for each man, would require 4,583 additional pair of hands; and in the one case, the work would be performed by 8,333 men of a provident class, and in the other by 14,583 of a contrary disposition. On the recurrence of a decrease in the demand for labour, the smaller number would be prepared to meet it on their own increased resources, but the larger would become an engine of over production, and a depositary of distress. It is true that over production and excessive speculation tend to force new markets, from which there may afterwards flow a constant demand; but the more gradual extension of commerce, by a healthy supply and legitimate enterprise, is in every respect greatly to be preferred. It may be further observed, that when work is scarce, the employers are accustomed to divide it

amongst their workmen so as to give every one a share; and of course, the greater the population, the less is each man's portion; and here again the industrious are injured by the idle. In the case above supposed, the work would have to be divided either amongst 8,333 or 14,583, as the population was prudent, or the contrary.

If what has been said above be correct, it necessarily follows, that as trade and population increase, the tendency of the Poor Laws becomes more dangerous. The amazing extension of the powers of machinery too, though capable of producing under a carefully-regulated system, incalculable benefits to mankind, greatly aggravates the evils of over population, and furnishes a very strong additional reason for attempting a change in the habits of the labouring classes. Without an improvident population, it is impossible the evils of over production should ever rise to any thing like the magnitude that we now see periodically takes place. It is then, as before observed, the interest of the sound part of the community, whether high or low, to make every possible opposition to pauperism, and to whatever produces it.

§ 8. There is a dread with some people, that the labouring classes may be made so prudent as to become independent of work, or so refined as

to be above it, or that their habits may be so raised as to require exorbitant wages. That individuals may become independent of work, is very true and very desirable; but that very circumstance will always hold out sufficient temptation to ensure a supply of labourers. With respect to an increase of refinement, the error arises from taking the effect of transition for permanent effect. Where partial improvement is going on, the few who are the first to partake of it, are very likely, as the phrase is, to give themselves airs, and to appear above their work; but it is not the nature of the acquirement, but the newness of it and the distinction, which produce the evil. The individuals are not above their work, but above their fellow workmen. As soon as the improvement becomes general, the inconvenience ceases. It is a common complaint, on an extension of education, that female servants become difficult to be met with, and difficult to be managed; but in those parts of the country where the same extension has long existed, no such complaint is ever thought of. It must not be forgotten with respect to refinement, that the offices of labour are almost universally capable of being rendered much more agreeable and respectable than they have hitherto been. It is to be wished that every portion of the labouring

classes were too refined for the filth of Covent Garden, or the brutalities of Smithfield. The evil here lies in the bad contrivance and arrangement of those places of public concernment. It is surely a great error to spend nearly a million of money on a Penitentiary, whilst the hot-beds of vice from which it is filled, are wholly unattended to. What must necessarily be the moral state of the numerous class, constantly exposed to the vicissitudes of the weather, amidst the mud and putridities of Covent Garden? What ought it to be, where the occupation is amongst vegetables, fruit, and flowers, if there were well-regulated accommodations? As for Smithfield, it is only necessary to witness its horrors during the night and morning of a market, to be convinced of its corrupting effects, and without witnessing, description can scarcely be adequate. It ought to be the first care, well to adapt every public institution to the end intended; but to attempt to prevent, merely by penal enactments, the evils of mental debasement arising from deficient municipal regulations, is like the practice, which neglects the constitution, and applies caustic to each external eruption. But this is a subject of vast importance, and requiring a separate consideration. With

respect to raising the habits of the labouring classes, so as to require exorbitant wages, I will only observe in this place, that provided habits are proportionally raised, wages may be considerably augmented without increasing the cost of labour, and that the draw-backs upon the enjoyments of this beautiful world, arising from the ignorance, grossness, and dishonesty of the labouring classes are so numerous and so heavy, that scarcely any expense can be too great to remove them.

§ 9. Though the sum annually raised on account of pauperism is so large, yet in any ordinary period, the amount of real pauperism is probably much less than is supposed ; and of that amount a large proportion is directly produced by the certain anticipation of a provision from the parish. The expenses of management and of litigation, and indeed all the expenses of the system, except the money laid out for the actual maintenance of paupers, may here be put out of the question, because, if the latter could be dispensed with, the former would cease of course. A pauper, in the strict sense of the word, is one who being without property, and unable by his labour to support himself and those legally dependent upon him, and having no compe-

tent friends compellable or willing to help him, is forced to resort to the parish for relief. From the number of real paupers then are to be excepted, 1st. The few who have property, but conceal it, some of whom from miserly habits, receive relief for many years; 2dly. The more numerous class, with competent friends who would willingly assist them, but do not choose to save the parish; 3dly. The large class who successfully feign inability to perform or procure labour; 4thly. All those who by any other species of imposition, or by abuse on the part of their friends, wrongfully participate in the parish fund; and lastly, the more prudent portion of the immense number, who, whilst in full employ, receive a part of their maintenance from the poor's rates, which portion, if they were not remunerated in so degrading a mode, would learn immediately to depend upon themselves. So far as the classes above enumerated are concerned, no inconvenience would result from the immediate abolition of the Poor Laws. With respect to those who are really paupers, but who have become so from the certain anticipation of a provision from the parish, there may be reckoned, 1st. Those to whom property has at some period of their lives come, but who have wilfully run through it

in consequence of their habits having been previously formed according to the low standard of the Poor Laws ; 2dly. The numerous class who have had opportunities of accumulating, but who have wasted their means with a fixed determination eventually to have recourse to the parish ; 3dly. Those whose determined pauper habits have disgusted their friends, or made them lose opportunities of making some ; 4thly. Those who have incapacitated themselves from labour by dissolute habits, contracted from a reliance on parochial assistance ; 5thly. Those, (and a numerous class they are,) who, from perverseness of temper, have wilfully brought themselves upon the parish ; 6thly. Those who married from a reliance on the rates ; 7thly. Hereditary paupers. In country places, especially where there are no great changes, it will often be found, that the principal part of the poors' rates are paid to a few families, who have been in the habit of depending upon them from the remotest periods to which the accounts go back, and who think they have acquired as good a title to the parish fund as the land owners have to their estates ; lastly, those who have been persuaded by other paupers to pauperise themselves. I have not enumerated these different classes from theoretical inference,

but from practical observation; and it is obvious, that so far as they are concerned, the Poor Laws might without inconvenience be made to cease with the next generation.

§ 10. Amongst the various means of reducing pauperism, it is highly desirable that its true nature should become as generally understood as possible, in order that it may meet with more discouragement than has hitherto been given to it. It is to be wished, that the magistrates would not so frequently inculcate the doctrine of reliance upon the overseer, in the various cases of distress and difficulty presented before them—that the affluent and humane would not incautiously encourage applications to the parish, and on the plausible statements of the applicants, take part with them against those whose duty it is to be strict—that the employers of labour would not for the sake of a partial and temporary saving, assist in pauperising their workmen, who are sure to repay them with idleness, dishonesty, and refractoriness; that political partizans would not deceive the labouring classes, by holding out to them that they are *forced* into a state of dependence by misrule and oppression; and lastly, that the prudent part of those classes would not stand aloof from sympathy or fear, but would



heartily unite against the spirit of pauperism as the worst of all possible enemies to their nearest interests. There can be no humanity in the Poor Laws—if wages are not sufficient, they are only paying what is due in a degrading and cruel manner—if wages are sufficient, they are a provision held out before-hand to improvidence and all its desolating evils. *Nothing can permanently better the condition of the labouring classes, but an increase of prudence.* The effect of high wages upon an improvident population has already been shown. Any improvement in means would be wasted, or worse than wasted, unless there should be a corresponding improvement of habits. How could a reduction of taxation, or a diminution in the price of corn permanently benefit those who become idle and profligate, as the means of living become easy, or what better is a man in the end for being able to gain as much in four days as he gained in six, if he only works in proportion, or wastes his money as fast as he gets it? It is lamentable, but true, that to the improvident population of large towns, and to the pauperised labourers of most of the agricultural districts, any facilities for maintaining themselves, beyond drudging for the bare necessities of life, only make them work the

less, and multiply the faster. Of providing any resources for casualties or for old age, they have no idea; and it is this state of things which makes it so generally believed, that the Poor Law system cannot be dispensed with. Those who hold this opinion, do not look to a sufficiently high standard: they see that improvidence is the present characteristic of the labouring classes, and that the improvident as a body, will not labour unless compelled by necessity; therefore, it is concluded, that the bulk of mankind must be kept on the verge of necessity, or that the requisite labour will not be performed. But the most efficiently industrious are those who, having fixed their minds upon securing comfort and independence, are constantly intent on the means; and there is no reason in the nature of things, why the requisite habits should not be made as prevalent as the opposite ones are now.

§ 11. One of the most important considerations in estimating the effects of pauperism, is a clear understanding on the subject of the cost of labour. Any man who should wish to make a horse capable of doing the most work at the cheapest rate, would feed him well, and train him well, so as to make him strong, active, and free from vice, and would keep him under the management of a careful attendant. The whole cost of breed-

ing, training, and keeping that horse would be the cost of his labour, and it would be the lowest rate at which the same quantity of horse labour could be obtained. But if a man should feed his horse insufficiently, or should neglect his training, or should keep him under the management of an unfit attendant, so that he should be weak, or awkward, or vicious, or badly taken care of, and should consequently not be able to do so much work for want of strength or activity, or should sometimes refuse to work, or should break or lame what came in his way, or should break his pasture, and damage fences or crops, or should be frequently ill—one or more of these things—the labour of that horse would cost more in proportion than that of the former. Again, if a man should wish to breed many horses for the greatest quantity of labour at the cheapest rate, he would pursue just the same course as in the first case, and he would take care to breed no more than he had occasion for; and the cost of his whole stud, working and breeding, would be the cost of the labour he would get from them, and it would be the least possible cost in proportion to the quantity of labour. But if another man should wish to breed many horses for their labour, and should pursue the same course as in the second

case, and should besides let his stud breed, as desire prompted them, more than he had occasion for, and should suffer the superfluous numbers to run idle and untrained, damaging his property, and misleading and injuring his working horses, the cost of the whole of his stud, working, or breeding, or idle, would in like manner be the cost of the labour he would get from them, and would consequently be greater in proportion than in the last case. It is just so in principle with the labour of man; and that state which would command the greatest quantity at the cheapest rate, must exactly pursue the same course as in the third case, making allowance for the difference between reasonable beings and brutes. Its laws and institutions must be adapted in the best possible manner to have those who are to perform the labour, well kept and well trained in their youth, so that they may be not only strong, active, and free from vice, but skilful and intelligent, and that when they are grown up, instead of requiring like horses, the careful management of others, they may be in the best condition to use the privilege of their nature, and manage themselves. Instead of controlling them like beasts, it will use every effort to induce them not to increase their numbers more rapidly than there is a demand

for their labour, and as they cannot like beasts, be knocked on the head, it will hold out every possible facility to enable them in their season of vigour to secure an old age of independence and comfort. But if any state should neglect to adopt such laws and institutions as are best calculated to cause those who are to perform the labour, to be well fed and well trained in their youth, or should adopt laws and institutions calculated to produce a contrary effect, so that when they grow up there will be a greater number than there might have been unable or unwilling to work, or unskilful or stupid, or vicious, or mischievous, or diseased, or incapable, more or less, of managing themselves, or that no care should be taken to prevent too great an increase of numbers or even encouragement held out to cause it, and that consequently many should remain idle, and should be uneducated, and should injure property and mislead those who are engaged in work; the cost of their labour, which would be the cost of maintaining the whole class industrious and idle, would be proportionably greater than in the last case.

It follows then that, so far as morals alone are concerned, the cost of labour to the state will be low in proportion as those

who perform it, possess health, strength, industry, skill, honesty, and prudence; those qualifications being imparted at the cheapest price, whatever that price may be. Therefore the nominal cost differs greatly from the real, and labour may sometimes perchance be cheaper at 20s. a week than at 7s. The direct wages of labour are only a part of the real cost, the difference being divided in various proportions between the employer and the public. All the expenses arising out of the diseases of the labouring classes and from their education, beyond what they pay themselves, all that is given them in charity, all the expenses of guarding against, prosecuting and punishing their crimes, all losses from their ignorance and dishonesty; and the Poors' Rates, so far as they are appropriated to the expenses of pauperism, are to be added to their wages to make up the cost of labour to the community. Enormous as the amount of these sums must annually be, and the greater part of which might be saved, I believe it is not equal to the amount to be expected from the improvement of property that would soon take place if the habits of the labouring classes were raised as they might be.

There is a certain price for every thing, and any attempt to force it below, produces a con-

trary effect, though it may cause a division of the payment. Individuals may contrive to lower wages, and may throw the difference, with the increased cost of labour, upon the public—the state may inadequately remunerate those it employs, and thereby keep down the amount of taxation; but the means of paying the taxation will be inevitably diminished in a greater proportion. It is in the nature of things that pauperized labourers should be dearer than independent ones, and that public servants inadequately paid should be either unequal to their duties, or negligent or corrupt in the discharge of them. It is beyond a doubt that an armed force raised by conscription or impressment, by ballot or by the seductions of enlistment, costs a nation more than the necessary price, though it may cost the government less. The general rule for obtaining labour of whatsoever kind at the cheapest rate seems to be, first, to render the service as agreeable and respectable as its duties will permit, and then to offer in open market the lowest direct remuneration which will induce the best qualified spontaneously to engage themselves, and willingly to continue. I believe if the subject were closely pursued, it would appear that by rendering the various offices of labour as little irksome as may be

practicable, and by approximating by all possible means the wages of labour to the cost of labour, pauperism and crime might be very considerably reduced; and that notwithstanding the general opinion to the contrary, even under present circumstances the cost of labour, taking quantity and quality together, is less in England, owing to its superior advancement, than in any other country in the world. *The same union of activity and perseverance, the same manly discipline, the same noiseless efficiency,* that distinguish the best English soldiers and sailors, are to be found in the best classes of English workmen; and these are points of comparison much more to be depended upon than the fallacious ones of daily wages, the price of bread or the amount of taxation. The hope of an immediate and adequate reward and the certainty of the secure enjoyment of it are indispensably necessary to obtain labour at the lowest price, and however high that price may be, still it is the lowest possible. By a law of nature the slave is the dearest of labourers, and the man whose *heart* is in his work the cheapest—nay, even the brute who is going home in the hope of eating his corn in comfort, is able to accomplish more than by any urging that can be inflicted upon him. Heart, kept



constant by prudence, constitutes the perfection of a labourer.

The cost of labour is divisible into two parts; the necessary and the unnecessary. The first consists of direct and indirect wages; the second of the expenses of ignorance, vice, and improvidence. As science and wealth are diffused, the effects of ignorance become more injurious, and the temptations to vice and improvidence greater. But for the pains that have been partially taken to enlighten the working classes, it is impossible that the principal manufacturing towns and districts could have reached their present state of prosperity. The degree of ignorance which prevailed thirty years ago, would not have permitted such collections of numbers amidst such a diffusion of riches. Improvidence and disorder would long since have gained an overwhelming ascendancy; and they remain to their present extent chiefly because knowledge has not made a co-ordinate progress with wealth. In estimating the effects of the diffusion of education, it is not a comparison of the relative quantity of disorder formerly, with that which exists now, but with that which would exist now if there had been no such diffusion. If the town of Manchester for instance, sixty years ago con-

tained 40,000 inhabitants, and now contains 160,000, and if the quantity of disorder were even more than quadrupled, yet it would not be reasonable to say the spread of knowledge was the cause. The true account most probably would be that but for the spread of knowledge, the present wealthy population could not hold together at all. It is with communities as with individuals—an industrious man begins the world in comparative ignorance and poverty—he acquires wealth, and argues that as he prospered without education so may his son, and profligacy and ruin are the consequences. The real cause of the decline of great empires is the same. Some master spirit makes a beginning, and as wealth encreases, the only alternative is a corresponding moral improvement or eventual destruction.

It is not to be supposed that a general advance amongst the inferior classes of society would be accomplished without inducing a similar improvement in their superiors—that the paralyzing effects of the spirit of pauperism would cease in the extremities only. Here then is a double reason for exertion; for of all taxes upon means—of all clogs to self-advancement—of all draw-backs upon enjoyment, assuredly the dependence of those who ought to depend upon themselves is the heaviest and most irksome. No station in

life is too high—none too low to escape this scourge. The peer of princely fortune, the frugal tradesman, and the industrious labourer, each in his degree, is haunted, threatened, importuned, and preyed upon. To avoid this fate, how many are afraid to accumulate ! how many give up in despair ! how many seeing ruin inevitable, prefer to ruin themselves, and plunge into that state it would have been the labour of their lives to avoid !

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The means I would propose for the *commencement* of a systematic reduction of pauperism are twofold : first, a practical alteration in the Law ; and secondly, an organized plan for the improvement of the habits of the labouring classes. In the able Report from the Committee of the House of Commons on the Poor Laws, in 1817, it is observed, “ The efficacy of any expedient which can be suggested, must depend upon some of those who are most interested in the welfare of a parish, taking an active share in the administration of its concerns. Without this the Committee are convinced no benefit will be derived from any amendment that can be made in the

details of the system." The alteration in the Law I am about to suggest, is strictly in conformity with this opinion. It is to put an end to magisterial interference *in all questions of relief*. By the 43d of Eliz. as I have already observed, no such interference was contemplated. By that statute the power of granting relief was vested without controul, in the officers elected by the parish; and the consequences being great abuse on the side of extravagance, an Act was passed ninety years afterwards to take the power from the overseers, and place it in the vestry—between the meetings of which the overseers were permitted to obtain the authority of a justice or of the Quarter Sessions for granting relief in particular cases. It appears this authority, which was intended for the justification of the overseers, was ere long frequently perverted into an order upon them; and the perversion becoming the subject of complaint, instead of being put a stop to, was regulated by parliament thirty years later—but *for above half the period which has elapsed since the introduction of the present Poor Laws, the interference of magistrates in questions of relief formed no part of the system.* The defect lay in placing the power of granting

relief in the *general* vestry, the constitution of which was too unwieldy for the transaction of the business imposed upon it. *The Select Vestry Act has completely remedied this defect, and therefore the change I propose is a restoration and not an innovation.* The expediency of the change struck me during a practical investigation three years ago, for the reasons which I then wrote down and now subjoin ; and looking in consequence into the different Acts, I traced the history above given, which will be found more in detail in the Appendix No. II. The reasons are as follow :

1st. The members of the select vestry possess the best opportunities of ascertaining the merits of each particular case. The justices, on the contrary, frequently and almost necessarily lay down *general* rules for ordering relief; they have seldom time or the means for coming at the exact truth. It is not possible for the overseer to repeat all the reasons brought forward in the vestry, or to give the same effect to statements at second hand, which was rightly produced by the character and credit of the persons originally furnishing them. The decision of the vestry was perhaps the result of long discussion and much evidence, by the parties best acquainted with the case. *The decision of the justices*

*cannot well be the result of any thing but a contest between the pauper and the overseer.*

2dly. The overseer is often a timid or injudicious advocate for the parish; whereas the pauper is generally extremely artful—the most undeserving being almost always the most plausible, and the idlest in good works the most persevering in obtaining relief.

3dly. If the paupers knew there was no possibility of appeal, they would rely more upon honest exertion and good character, and less upon imposition. As the law now stands, their hopes are always kept alive, and they live in a constant state of uneasiness very prejudicial to their well-being. They would also be effectually deterred from gaining settlements surreptitiously—an evil which no legal enactments have hitherto been able altogether to prevent.

4thly. The considerations of time and expense, necessary in attending the magistrates, operate as a powerful discouragement to parishes to be as strict with their poor as they ought to be. The vestry often submit to what they feel to be an imposition, rather than run the risk of an appeal—especially as they are sometimes obliged to pay the pauper for the time he has spent in harassing the overseer.

5thly. If the decisions of the Select Vestry were final, I think the management of the Poor would, generally speaking, fall into much better hands than heretofore. It is the certain effect of the present system, that men in the same rank with the magistrates and those a little below, will feel great repugnance to interfere as long as their efforts shall be liable to be rendered of no avail by the counter-decisions of those whose motives cannot be supposed to be more pure, and whose means of judging are necessarily more limited than their own. They feel also that the right of appeal has a tendency to degrade and render them odious in the eyes of the inferior classes, as well as to embroil them with the magistrates. If the management of the Poor rested solely with the Select Vestry, the active would make it their business to attend in the hope of doing good, and the humane to prevent evil. The magistrates too, by being relieved from the necessity of hearing the Poor, which is often the most laborious, the most unpleasant, and the most unsatisfactory part of their duties, would have more leisure to attend to the other business brought before them; and many men with high qualifications, at present unwilling to make the necessary sacrifice of time and of ease,

might be induced with this alleviation, to act in the commission of the peace.

6thly and lastly. The minister of each parish is, *ex officio*, a member of the Vestry, and yet from him, assisted by his most respectable parishioners, lies an appeal to the magistrates *on the grounds of inhumanity or injustice*. The consequence is, the clergyman not to expose himself to a great scandal, will seldom attend; and the magistrate, being the judge of appeal, cannot.

Besides the above reasons my opinion has been confirmed by the very excellent evidence of the Rev. Henry Duncan, (the first establisher of Savings' Banks,) given in the Report from the Committee of the House of Commons on the Poor Laws in 1819. See p. 13 on the interference of the Sheriff in Scotland.

As the effect of any principle is very much weakened unless its enforcement is general, I think it highly desirable that the constitution of select vestries should be made imperative, whenever it is practicable, and that in parishes or divisions not possessing the necessary elements, the General Vestry should be invested with similar powers. As the Select Vestry Act has now been in operation some years and with very beneficial results, there is the less hazard in set-



ting it to work by itself; and in extending its powers to the cases above alluded to, I cannot see any evils likely to counterbalance the advantages to be derived from uniformity of system. In the Act which first empowers magistrates to dispose of the Parish Funds, *no complaint whatever of oppression is even hinted at*. I have always thought from observation that the right of appeal to the magistrates was the sole cause of whatever alienation existed between the Payers of Rates and the labouring classes, and that the spirit of opposition and not of oppression, was the evil to be guarded against. It is certain that the most worthless are the first to appeal to the justices; their example is followed, and a general hostility is the consequence. In the more enlightened parishes, of course, there would be no danger of oppression—in the less so, the tendency is the other way, for it will be found universally that, amongst the ignorant, fear, favour, and a false calculation of interest, strongly tend to increase the allowance of Parish pay; and it is the practice of paupers to act in concert, and clamourously to inveigh against any infringement of the supposed rights of even the most helpless of their body.

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When I began to arrange the above Observations, it was my intention to have proceeded at once to a conclusion ; but it now appears to me preferable to reserve the development of the means I would suggest for improving the habits of the labouring classes till I ascertain whether what I have already written excites a sufficient degree of attention to make a continuation advisable. In addition to this reason, I am anxious to give publicity without farther delay, to those parts of my observations which seem to me particularly to apply to the circumstances of the times. .

With a view to familiarize the uninitiated with the nature of Pauperism, which it is my object to bring into hatred and contempt, and to assist those who may be desirous of grappling with this formidable enemy to the national welfare, I have added in the Appendix a few documents, which were drawn up at different times fresh from practical investigation. By confining the power of granting relief to the Select Vestry, and by making the effects of Pauperism generally understood, I think even without the adoption of any other means, a great improvement would soon be brought about.

I cannot conclude without observing that no argument can be drawn against the practicabi-

lity of reducing Pauperism in England, from the quantity existing in other countries where there are no Poor Laws; because in other countries the advantages of wealth and civilization are much fewer; and not only are there institutions, more or less numerous for the support of Pauperism, but its encouragement is almost every where made a duty of religion.

## APPENDIX.

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### No. I. (p. 5.)

The writer of this letter, who has for many years filled the situation of Solicitor to the town of Manchester, is the principal inhabitant in the township of Stretford.

Manchester, 27th August, 1823.

My dear Sir,

When you were absent, the principal inhabitants and landowners of Stretford, fully impressed with the value of your services to that township, had the pleasure of recording their grateful and unanimous sentiments on this subject. They did not indeed content themselves with merely endeavouring to express these sentiments in their proceedings, but the same impulse at once led them to the determination of offering to your acceptance a piece of plate, as a further and more lasting proof of the unfeigned respect and gratitude with which they regarded your very able, laborious, and unwearied exertions in the true interests of the township.

To me, as one of the inhabitants and as a friend, it is a most pleasing duty to be the direct means of conveying to you this testimony of public feeling. I know I speak the language of all in saying that our local affairs were grossly neglected and deranged before your attention was directed to them. The rates were much higher than necessary and the poor discontented. You not only suggested the remedy, but personally superintended its progress and effect, with a degree of alacrity and perseverance scarcely to be equalled. The result was successful. Our parochial concerns were brought into order, our burthens were considerably reduced; and the poor satisfied. Such considerations as these are of the highest interest, and must long live in the remembrance of your fellow-townsmen.

The intrinsic amount of their tribute is trifling, but the

cordial and lively spirit by which it was dictated, will not, they trust, be deemed unacceptable.

You have their best wishes, and certainly those of, dear Sir,

Yours always faithfully and obliged,  
WILLIAM SERGEANT.

Thomas Walker, Esq.

Longford.

It must not be supposed that all the trouble I took in the township of Stretford, was necessary to effect the reduction in the rates; having studied the principle of the Poor Laws, I was anxious to make myself master of the details. In an agricultural parish with which I am acquainted in one of the Midland Counties, the following reductions were made in the total annual amounts of the rates merely by the exertions of some of the farmers, and here also a workhouse might have been dispensed with.

	£	s.	d.
1819 . . .	2158	2	10
1820 . . .	1277	16	9
1821 . . .	837	9	6
1822* . . .	871	1	8
1823 . . .	783	17	6½

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No. II. (p. 66.)

Berry Pomeroy, May 1st, 1823.

AFTER an attentive investigation of the Poor Laws, I have arrived at these curious facts: 1st. That, till ninety years after the passing the 43d Eliz. the interference of magistrates, in questions of relief, was neither authorized by law nor adopted in practice. 2dly. That it was first introduced in 3d and 4th William and Mary, but subordinately to the Vestry, and for the protection of the parish from extravagance, and not of the poor from oppression. 3dly. That it was made independent of the vestry in 1723, by the 9th Geo. I. from a fatal misconception and perversion of the statute

\* This year there was an extraordinary addition to the County rates.

of W. and M. And lastly, that the sole reason of its original partial introduction was to supply a deficiency, which the Select Vestry Act has completely provided for.

The material words of the 43d Eliz. are, "The churchwardens and overseers, or the greater part of them, shall take order from time to time, *by and with the consent of two or more justices*, for setting to work the children of all such parents, as shall not by the said churchwardens and overseers be thought able to maintain their children; and also for setting to work all such persons having no means to maintain them, and use no ordinary and daily trade to get their living by; and also to raise by taxation of every inhabitant, in such competent sums of money as they shall think fit, a convenient stock to set the poor on work; and all competent sums for and towards the necessary relief of the lame, impotent, old, blind, and such other among them, being poor and not able to work; and also for the putting out of such children to be apprentices; and to do and execute all other things concerning the premises, as to them shall seem convenient."

The taking the children from their parents, and the setting to work those, who having no means, use no daily trade to get their living by, being enactments which abridged the liberty of the subject, it was naturally judged expedient to interpose between the officers and the paupers, the consent of two or more justices; and the compulsory assessment was also very properly accompanied on behalf of the parishioners by the same restriction. But the granting relief to the helpless poor (the only class to which it was meant to be extended, and which is accurately specified) was left entirely to the discretion of the churchwardens and overseers. First, the consent of the justices is made necessary to remove the children and to set the others to work, and then to raise the funds required for those purposes, and for the purpose of relieving the impotent poor. The money is directed to be raised, 1st. For purchasing materials; 2dly. For relieving the impotent; and 3dly. For putting out the children apprentices. For the last purpose the consent of the justices is previously and distinctly declared to be necessary. Why not for the second, if it were so intended? But it may as well be said, that consent is required to fix what

materials shall be purchased, as what relief shall be granted. Originally it was left to the religious orders to relieve according to their discretion ; afterwards to each parish by voluntary contributions ; and the object of the statute, so far as relief is concerned, seems to have been merely to substitute a power of taxation in place of the former unequal mode. Those who furnished the fund were still left to distribute it ; and from considerations of convenience, officers were to be chosen by themselves for the purpose.

It is to be observed that the only power vested in the parishioners, is that of chusing their officers, and that no controul whatever is reserved. As far as liberty and taxation are concerned, a right of controul is given to the magistrates, but none of *direction* in any case whatever.

If any doubt can remain respecting this interpretation, it must be removed by the 3 & 4 W. & M. c. 11. s. 11., which contains these words : “ Whereas many inconveniences do arise in parishes, *by reason of the unlimited power of the overseers of the poor*, who do frequently upon frivolous pretences, (but chiefly for their own private ends,) give relief to what persons and number they think fit, by which means the rates are daily increased, contrary to the true intent of a statute made in the 43d Eliz. : for remedying of which abuses be it enacted, that as often as it shall be thought convenient, the parishioners shall meet in their vestry, and all persons receiving collection shall be called over, and the reasons of their taking relief examined, and a new list made and entered of such persons as they shall think fit and allow to receive collection, and that no other person be allowed to receive collection, but by authority under the hand of one justice residing within such parish, or, (if none be there dwelling) in the parts near or next adjoining, or by order of the justices in their respective quarter sessions, except in cases of pestilential diseases, plague, or small pox.”

The expression, “ unlimited power of the overseers,” indicates that the consent of justices was not meant to be extended in the 43d Eliz. to particular cases of granting relief. Their consent to raising money, generally, was found an insufficient check, and therefore the power of giving relief was taken from the overseers and vested

in the parishioners, in vestry to be assembled, as often as should be thought convenient. This power was to be as unlimited in the vestry, as it had been with the overseers; but to provide for cases, arising between the meetings, the overseers might obtain an authority from one justice, residing in the parish, (as being the most likely for his own interest to prevent extravagance,) or, if there were none such, they might apply to a neighbouring justice, or to the Quarter Sessions for an order, and in cases of pestilential diseases, (to prevent greater evils to the parish,) they might still act on their own authority. It is to be observed with what care the act is framed to guard against abuse. First, application is to be made to a justice, residing in the parish, then to one in the parts near or next adjoining, and lastly, if none such there be, not to *any* justice, who may have no interest, but to the Quarter Sessions. The object of this provision of the statute having been mistaken, the Courts have held that it was not necessary strictly to adhere to it. See Nolan's Poor Laws, vol 2, p. 192-3.

It is clear that the authority of the justice and the order of Quarter Sessions were only intended to be granted on the application of the overseers for their own justification, and it is as clear that the power of the parishioners was intended to be without controul, and that they could, whenever they pleased, assemble in vestry, and make out a new list of such persons only as they might decide to be entitled to relief. The object of the statute was to remedy the abuses arising from the power of the overseers; the means devised were to transfer the power to the parishioners; but, as they could not be constantly in a condition to exercise it, it was in the intervals continued to the overseers, but qualified by the sanction of one justice or of the Quarter Sessions. No abuse is complained of on the part of the poor; and it is not to be supposed, that, without any reason stated, the parish funds would be placed at the absolute disposal of the justices, and that too merely by an exception to a positive enactment, which declares that no person shall receive relief, except those who have been examined by the parishioners, and by them entered in a list, which they may alter whenever they please.

However, by the 9th Geo. 1, c. 7. s. 1 & 2, it appears in some instances, through ignorance or love of power,



to have been so understood and acted upon. This statute affords a specimen of very careless legislation; it is founded in error, and is framed unskilfully and with great inattention to the act of W. & M. It states in very odd terms, that "Whereas under colour of the proviso in the said act, *many persons have applied to some justices of the peace*, without the knowledge of any officers of the parish, and thereby, upon untrue suggestions, and sometimes upon false or frivolous pretences, have obtained relief, which hath greatly contributed to the increase of the parish rates: for remedy whereof be it enacted, That, from March 25th, 1723, no justice shall order relief to any poor person, until oath be made before such justice of some matter, which he shall judge to be a reasonable cause for having such relief, and that the same person had applied for relief at some vestry or other public meeting, or to two of the overseers, and was by them refused to be relieved, and until such justice hath summoned *two* of the overseers to shew cause why such relief should not be given, and the *person* so summoned hath been heard, or made default to appear."

"Sect. 2. And be it further enacted, That the person whom any such justices shall think fit to order to be relieved, shall be entered as one of those who is to receive collection, as long as the cause for such relief continues, and no longer; and that no officer of any parish shall (except upon sudden and emergent occasion) bring to the account of the parish any monies he shall give to any poor person, who is not registered as a person entitled to receive collection, on pain of forfeiting £5."

This act, which is the first that legalizes the interference of magistrates in ordering relief in opposition to the parishioners, is a clumsy attempt to regulate an injurious perversion of the amendment of the 43d Eliz. The allowing paupers to apply at *any public meeting*, other than the vestry and for whatever purpose convened, and, if refused relief, to appeal to *any justice*, opened a wide door to imposition and improvidence. If there were no other proof, it would be clear from the words, "under colour of the proviso of the said act *many persons have applied, &c.*" that, before the 3 & 4 W. & M. the interference of the justices was never

thought of; and if it had been intended, by that statute to give such a power, it must have been in the nature of an appeal, and some such provisions as are found in 9th Geo. I., would have been inevitably introduced; for it never could have been meant that the vestry and the justices, singly or at Quarter Sessions, should have a concurrent jurisdiction. The inconveniences are too obvious. For the purposes of the 43d Eliz. the consent of two justices was made necessary; but for the purpose of giving merely a temporary sanction to the overseers in 3 & 4 W. & M., the authority of one was judged sufficient, and the framers of 9th Geo. I., proceeding altogether in error, adopted the latter rule, though for the absolute disposal of the parish funds,

The 9 Geo. I., from a misconstruction of the 43 Eliz. is also the first statute that makes any provision (not of a penal nature) for the able bodied poor. By the 4th Sect. a power is given to establish houses of industry for the employment of such as "desire relief;" and by the 36 Geo. III. c. 23. s. 2. it was enacted, that "it shall be lawful for any justice or justices, acting in his or their own district, at his or their just and proper discretion, to order relief to any industrious poor person at his or her house or home." This last dangerous innovation, united with and perhaps caused by the peculiar circumstances of the times, brought pauperism to its highest pitch; when after much investigation the 59th Geo. III. c. 12. commonly called the Select Vestry Act, was passed; which, aided by the 58 Geo. III. c. 69., has produced and is producing very beneficial effects.

### No. III.

*This dialogue between a select vestryman and a labourer, was composed from conversations held with labourers at different times, on the subject of pauperism.*

Could I say a word to you, sir, concerning this old man?

Oh! certainly; what does he want?

He wants you to speak for him in the vestry. He is more than threescore and ten. He has been a good workman in his time, but you see he is almost done: you won't say but the parish ought to do something for such as him, for he has not a penny nor a penny's worth.

The parish ought to do! he ought to have done for himself. Above fifty years labour, a good workman, and not saved *one* penny! I dare say, if he had all the money he has spent in getting drunk, and all the wages of the idle days he has made, he would not need to trouble the parish.

Bless you, sir! he never had it in his power to drink much. He has brought up a large family, as many as ten children. He loved a little drink too, when he could catch it, but he is but like other folks in that.

The more's the pity; but so it is, if your neighbours do wrong, that is an excuse for you all: because others drink their wages, and come upon the parish, you think you will do the same, that they may have no advantage over you. I suppose what you call bringing up these ten children was keeping them in filth and rags, and instead of sending them to school, going himself to the alehouse. Where were they generally to be found?—tumbling about in the lanes, without shoes and stockings?

There was no great care taken of them, I believe.

So there is not one now able to do any thing towards helping the old man. What is become of them all? But perhaps the less that is said about them, the better.

Why, they did 'nt turn out so well as they might have done, any of them.

I dare say they turned out quite as well as could be expected. Now if he had laid out his spare money in bringing up his family carefully, do you suppose there would not have been one out of his ten children, or his ten children's children able to assist him in return.

It's much if there would not.

Well! at any rate he might have taught them to be honest, and industrious, and clean, and civil spoken; all that costs nothing, you know, but a little trouble and setting a good example. He would then have had no difficulty in finding them good places; and when they had got a little money themselves, they could have gone to a night school or something of that sort, and it would be strange if some of them had not got forward in the world. Respectable people like to take those they employ, out of a well-reputed family; and, when they have taken them, to stand their friends; and one good one in a family, helps on another.

Well! I never thought of all that before.

Many a lucky thing will fall out that you never thought of, if you will but do the best you can for yourselves: but if you cannot do just as you wish, you will do nothing, or worse than nothing. If a labouring man has a large family, I know it requires management to bring them up well, but he can sooner get them out for it, and in return they are sure to be able to repay him some time, some of them, instead of coming to him again, as perhaps this old man's have done.

Aye, they've troubled him sadly in that way.

Well then, it is good both ways you see; not that I approve of parents depending upon their children in their old age, except where they have had more than common difficulties to strive against, or where they have done more for their children than in their situation could have been expected of them. In other cases, they ought to lay by for themselves, and leave their children free.

But there are not many that can do as you say.

What is to prevent them, unless it be poaching, rat hunting, bear baiting, frequenting the alehouse, and the like? In the mean time their children run wild, half clothed, half starved, stealing any thing they can lay hold of. If you were a master, would you employ such?

I don't think I should be very fond of them.

The consequence is therefore, they can only get odd jobs now and then, when there is more work than hands, and they get idle, drunken, dishonest habits, which soon leave them only two chances—a gaol or the workhouse. Instead of thinking of raising themselves, they think how little work they can do, how much drink they can get, how much they can pillage, or what is very little better, how they can impose on the parish; for all that the idle get, must come out of somebody's industry or property. Now, what do you say?

Why, I believe sir, you have given nearly a true account; but as for this old fellow, you must recollect that the times have been very bad.

I know that; but do you mean to say that he laid by money when the times were good, and that you apply to the parish for him, because he has spent all his savings in keeping himself since times have been so bad?

Nay, I can't say I think he ever saved much.

Then what better would he be now, however good the times had been? Would he be a penny richer? With

most of you, (I don't say all,) the only difference between good and bad times is, that when they are good, you drink more and work less, and when they are very good, there are many who choose to work and starve one week in order to drink and be idle the next, and that is all the good they get. You know, they say they belong to a good parish; they don't care for spending the last penny; they are sure to be provided for; there's property enough. They shall be provided for, they may depend upon it; they shall be provided with hard work and coarse food. The money that is taken from the industrious to keep the idle, shall no longer be taken in this parish. As for this foolish old man, he is past mending, so we must see what little work he can do, and allow him some trifle in addition. When any of you once think of living by any other means than your own honest labour, from that moment, you may depend upon it, you doom yourselves to lives of poverty and wretchedness. So, good bye to you, and take care of yourself.

Well, sir! I have never troubled the parish for a farthing.

It would have been a disgrace if you had; but have you never thought about it? How often have you and your wife talked it over when any of your neighbours got relief? How often have they tried to persuade you to apply, and told you you were fools for slaving? If you had not been ashamed to show those active limbs of yours, should we never have seen you at the Vestry? Come, be honest, and tell the truth. Well! I won't press you; your silence is an answer. I'll tell you what—the parish is the ruin of nearly all of you; and they are your worst enemies that countenance you in having any thing to do with it. Again, let me advise you to depend only upon yourself.

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#### No. IV.

*The following address to a number of pauperized labourers, was written with a view to particular application, but, owing to circumstances, was never made use of. It was intended for the commencement of an improvement of system.*

I wish to talk to you a little about your condition, which I would willingly help you to mend.

You ought to be better fed, better clothed, and better lodged. Every labourer in the land should be able to earn sufficient wages to procure himself a constant supply of comfortable clothing and nourishing food; he ought to have the means of bringing up his children decently, and of teaching them what is suitable to their condition; he should be able to provide against the common accidents and sicknesses of life, and also to lay by a sufficient store to maintain his old age in comfort. All this he should be able to do by his own industry. There are many things to be considered, and many things to be done, in order to bring about this change. Let us begin with considering parish relief, what it is, and what effect it produces. There is nothing which concerns you more. I dare say you think parish relief is something in addition to wages. You are mistaken—it is chiefly a part of wages, but given in a manner most hurtful to those who receive and those who pay. I will try to make this matter plain to you. Let us suppose there to be two parishes, each containing 20 farmers and 100 labourers, and suppose the labour of each man to cost the farmer 2*s.* a day, but that in one parish the labourer only receives 1*s.* 6*d.* the 6*d.* being kept back, and put into a fund, to be paid to him upon certain conditions. Suppose also, that in the other parish, at the end of each week, each man receives for each day he has worked his full wages of 2*s.* and suppose that he has nothing farther to look to. You understand, as he does his work, he receives the whole of his wages of 2*s.* a day; and upon his wages alone he is to depend in sickness and in health, whether he has work, or whether he has none, and for the maintenance of his family whether large or small, and in his old age he is to have nothing to look to but the savings of his youth. Let us see how it is likely he will conduct himself. As he has good wages, he will be able to live well, and to work hard; now, as there is nothing so good for health as hard work with good living, he will seldom lose any time from sickness, or be at any expense for the doctor. As he will have no pay if he cannot get work, he will take care to keep a good character, and satisfy his employer. As he will have no allowance for a large family, he will not marry till a reasonable time, and will most likely look out for a wife like

himself, who can work hard, and manage well. As he knows the comforts of his old age must depend entirely upon the prudence of his early years, he will constantly be laying by part of his wages, and as a steady man generally keeps his strength long, he will be able to save enough to spend his latter days in ease and independence. In such a parish is not this the way that people would generally go on?

Now let us return to the other parish, where the labourer receives for his wages only 1s. 6d. a day of his 2s. and where the 6d. is put into a fund, and suppose the conditions upon which he is to receive any thing from the fund to be, 1st. He must not have saved any thing for himself, or if he has, he must have spent it all before he can have any claim. 2dly. He must be unable to get work; or he must be unable to perform it from sickness, accident, or old age; or 3dly. He must have a larger family than he can possibly keep upon his slender wages. How will a man live then? He will begin by saying, what is the use of my saving?—besides, how can I save out of 1s. 6d. a day? So if he gets more by any chance, he will spend it all, because he had given up all thoughts of saving. As he knows that if he cannot get work, the fund must keep him, he will not so much mind getting a constant place, or giving satisfaction in any place. As whilst he is young, he does not see much cause why he should be steady, having the fund to look to, he will take little care of himself; and as he knows that he can manage to keep a small family somehow or other, and that if he has a large one he shall have help, he will marry without thought, and perhaps repent as soon as he is married. Then he must work hard, and live poorly; sickness comes, upon himself and his family; he applies to the fund, and gets his pittance. Having once begun, he is ever after contriving how to keep on, by throwing himself out of work, pretending to be ill, or wasting his means. His claims are disputed; he goes backward and forward, loses his time, drinks for vexation, and is a ruined man to the end of his life. His example ruins his children, who follow the same course of improvidence, marry without thought, and spend their whole lives in misery. This course makes people increase faster than they are wanted; less money is paid in wages, and more into the fund, and things grow worse and worse. The

few who are inclined to be industrious and saving, are discouraged, and at last find it impossible. Their wages are taken from them, and given to the worthless, and they see they have no chance of getting any part back, but by doing as others do. And is not parish relief just this? Not money, as you supposed all taken out of the pockets of the rich to be given to the poor, but in a great measure a tax upon the wages of the labouring classes themselves, of which the most undeserving get the most, and the very meritorious get nothing at all, and of which a great deal is spent in law, or wasted in mismanagement. I am sure that in many parishes the occupiers of the land could better afford to give one-third more wages to good workmen, than to pay their poor's rates; and that here 12s. a week for daily labour to steady labourers would be cheaper to the farmers than 9s. in the present state of things. Now, I will put it to you—Would it be better to start in life with 12s. a week, and manage your own concerns, or have 3s. a week kept back to be given to you only if you fall into want, and if you have any luck in life, never to be given to you at all. A hale man, who takes care of himself, may well earn full wages for forty years of his time. Now, 3s. a week for forty years amounts to 312*l.* which large sum the Poor Laws, which were meant for your protection, take from the man who honestly earns it, and give it to the overseer—to distribute to whom? 1st. There are the overseers' expenses; then the expenses of law; and then the rest is divided amongst destitute children, or those who are sick, or infirm, or old, or who are unable to get work, or who have large families. But you will say, are destitute children, are the sick, the infirm, the old, or those who cannot get work, or who have more children than they can keep—are all these to be left without assistance? Certainly not; there they are, and as long as they are, they must be assisted: but I tell you, it is the Poor Laws, it is having a parish to look to, that makes destitute children, by making improvident parents. It is the same cause that makes the greatest part of sickness and infirmity in a class of men, who of all others might be most easily strong and healthy—I mean, farming labourers. It is the want of steadiness on the one hand, and the want of means on the other, both produced by the Poor Laws; it is to these



causes that we may trace almost all the sickness and infirmity which unfortunately are so common amongst you. It is to the Poor Laws that we may attribute so many labourers without work, and such large families without sufficient provision. Improvident marriages are the cause of both these evils, and the Poor Laws are decidedly the chief cause of improvident marriages. In other countries there are other causes, which produce these bad effects; but in England, which possesses so many advantages, it is to the Poor Laws almost alone that we may attribute the evils of pauperism. I do not mean to say, that with the best plan and the best management, there would not be particular cases of distress; now and then a destitute child—an individual reduced to poverty by long sickness or unexpected infirmity—an extreme old age, not sufficiently provided for—a partial scarcity of work, or a family larger than common prudence could maintain. Such accidents must happen more or less frequently; but where the generality were well provided for, what would a few instances the other way signify? Is there not private charity enough?—Would not you, yourselves, if you were well off, be willing to contribute to the assistance of the few unfortunate persons about you?—I am sure you would: *I am sure there would be no need of laws to provide for distress, if there were no laws to produce it.* Now, do not forget, that the poor's rates are a tax upon your wages, of which the most hard-working and prudent pay the most, and receive the least; and the most idle and spendthrift pay the least and receive the most.

If any of you still think that the poor rates are not principally raised out of your wages, I will explain it to you in another way. Suppose two farmers to hire five labourers each—and suppose one of the farmers to say to his labourers, “I shall only pay you wages when you work, and you must take care of your money, and provide for yourselves.” And suppose the other farmer to say, “I will allow you pay when I have no work for you, or when you are sick, or old, or if you have large families.” Would not he pay lower wages than the farmer who only paid according to the work done?—Just so it is in parishes; the farmers are obliged by law to pay those who cannot work; and so they are obliged to give less wages to those who can. I do not mean to say

that all the money which is paid in poors' rates would be paid in wages, if there were no poors' rates ; but a great part of it would ; perhaps, all that is now paid to the poor ; and the rest, such as the expenses of the overseers, and law expenses, would remain in the pockets of the farmers and the landlords ; besides which, steady labourers well paid, would do more work, and do it better, and be altogether better servants. If for the last seventy years what has been paid in poors' rates in this parish, had been paid in wages, and the labourers had been as careful as they ought to have been, the old would now be living comfortably on their own savings, instead of being dependent on the parish ; those who have larger families than they can keep, would have most likely waited a little before they had married, and there would be less sickness and less infirmity. The best part of 1000*l.* a year which is paid in poors' rates would be paid in wages ; the farmer would be better served, and the labourer better off ; but remember, that to bring about this change depends upon yourselves. High wages would bring ruin upon the farmers, unless the labourers were prudent ; they cannot now pay you when you work, as if they were not obliged to keep you when you cannot work ; but it would be better for them and better for you, if there were no such laws as the Poor Laws, and the sooner they can be done without, the better for all parties.

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No. V.

*The following statement, drawn up for the Duke of Somerset, is by his Grace's permission given without any alterations. I subjoin it as illustrative of the effects of the Poor Laws ; and it may possibly be of use to those who wish to make similar inquiries.*

The following account of the labouring classes in the parish of Berry Pomeroy is the result of information collected between November 1822 and May 1823 ; but there is so much difficulty in ascertaining the whole truth in such matters, that I do not pledge myself to accuracy in every particular. Few are able to represent things as they are—many wilfully pervert, and most

speak from some bias ; added to which, being a stranger in that part of the country, I was liable to fall into error from ignorance of local customs and expressions. However easy it may appear to discover the truth, it is only necessary to *persevere* in investigation to be convinced of the difficulty.

The labouring classes in Berry parish are certainly better off than in many parts of the kingdom, but it is in a slavish way. The children till ten or eleven years of age, are carelessly brought up, generally with parochial assistance, with an imperfect knowledge of reading, and a part of them with a still more imperfect knowledge of writing. They are then bound apprentices by the parish till they are twenty-one, at which period, with a moderate stock of clothes and a few shillings in their pockets, with a mere knowledge of drudgery, and great unskilfulness in domestic economy, without hope of bettering their condition, or thought of looking beyond the present moment, with the parish for their world, and the overseer for their guide, they become nominally free. The course then is to hire themselves as yearly servants for board, lodging and washing, and 5*l.* to 9*l.* in wages. They generally marry early, and then go into cottages or rooms as they can get them, with at most a small garden, a pig, and a hen or two. They then become daily labourers, and earn from 7*s.* to 10*s.* a week, (including an allowance of cider,) and their wives get about 8*d.* a day when there is out-door work ; at other times generally doing nothing. Their highest idea of independence is to maintain themselves as long as they have only a small family, and are in health, and can get labour in the parish or parts adjoining : but they look no further.\* Ignorance, and their reliance on the parish, bind the great majority of them to the soil as effectually as if they were Russian boors. There are a few who make voyages to Newfoundland, but are still frequently dependent on parochial relief, and the instances of those who get out into the world, are so few as not to be worth mentioning. Artizans, lime-burners, and cider makers, get higher wages than the agricultural labourers, but are more subject to want of

\* I should except those who are in sick clubs, but whose subscriptions the parish is frequently called upon to pay.

employment, and are equally or more improvident. The only present instance in the parish of a man bringing up a family without aid, is of a lime-burner at Langcombe, named Richard Warren, who, however laudable his practice, maintains from sympathy or fear, the same doctrine as the rest; and when age or infirmity overtakes him, he must come to the same state. From a conference I had with five of the most deserving or intelligent labourers of the parish, I was more convinced than before, even from their own partial and very guarded statements, of their ability to provide for themselves; but I was at the same time forcibly struck with the discouragements they labour under; and it appeared to me that after having compelled them to do their best, the consequence would be sooner or later to make them quit their unpromising situation, for the probability of turning their prudence to greater account in more favourable districts, leaving their places to be filled up by new comers, with their cast-off habits. It appears as impossible to retain a provident population in Bridgetown, as Bridgetown is, as to have a healthy one in a swamp—the place must be reformed as well as the people. It is certain, that of the labouring classes of all descriptions, whether strong or weak, skilful or unskilful, industrious or idle—whether with large or small families, married or unmarried, marrying late or early, daily labourers or artizans—whether possessing the most advantages or the fewest—whether working constantly for the richest, or occasionally for the poorest farmers, it is certain, that not one has more than a few pounds before hand. The system therefore is radically bad—a system of debasing equalization. The parish, on the one hand, holds out strong temptations to improvidence; and on the other there are no inducements, or none sufficiently powerful to encourage to a contrary course. There is a labourer at Berry, who has a wife and only one child: he is subject to an infirmity which occasionally disables him from labour, during which time he has relief from the parish. His wife is one of the only two remaining women possessed of looms. She might by industry gain as much as would keep her husband during his illnesses; but she has not used her loom for two years, pleading the difficulty of getting work, and the ill health of her child, but in reality, not choosing to “save the parish,” as the

phrase is—for that would be the only effect she perceives; and she would incur the blame of her compeers for an abandonment of their supposed rights. To compel her to work is possible, but it would be contending against public opinion, and perhaps inducing an intentional aggravation of the man's infirmity, in order to triumph over the parish, instances of which perverseness are by no means rare, nor are they to be wondered at, when it is considered that they are esteemed as a sort of self-devotion, or patriotic contest for the common rights. According to the present state of things, an individual of the lower class, who should be inclined to become provident, must suffer present privation for remote and uncertain advantages. All he could expect would be the accumulation of a little fund, from which whatever advantages he could derive, the sums he would otherwise have obtained from the parish, would be reckoned as so much lost, and so he would be continually told. He would have no means of turning his capital to account, as long as he remained in the parish, except perhaps by setting up a small shop, and all he could do would be to use his fund as his necessities obliged him, with the consciousness that it might fail at last, and leave him in no better state than the rest. "What is the use of saving?—the parish must keep us," is the common language; and unless it is made apparent, that they who save will have opportunities afforded them of providing *much* better for themselves than the parish will provide for them, it is almost in vain to think of creating a provident population. Saving implies present privation, and there must be future advantages held out, and those not very remote, to induce and preserve an alteration of habits. With attention and judgment, a system might be introduced, which would operate a completely beneficial change, making allowance for occasional instances of human frailty—that is, prudence might be made to become almost as general as improvidence is now. I shall confine myself however, to only one suggestion, (as being that alone, which under present circumstances is likely to be in any degree carried into practice,) and that relates to the residences of the labouring classes.

On account of the scarcity of accommodations, cottage rents are oppressively high, especially in Bridgetown.

A journeyman shoe-maker there, who has had fourteen children, and has five at home, pays 4*l.* 10*s.* a year for one room and a miserable garret, with a small garden. He gains 2*s.* or 3*s.* a week by teaching a night school; but during his wife's confinement in the spring, he was obliged to dismiss his scholars for want of room just when his expenses were the greatest, and the parish had to make up the difference. The crowded state of the population, and the wretched state of the accommodations are highly unfavourable to health and morals, and some of the labourers have to go three miles to their work, which in a hilly country and rainy climate, is a serious drawback upon their time in task work, a profitless wear of the constitution, and a frequent cause of disease and infirmity. After a sorry breakfast of weak suet broth, a labourer of *the poorer order* sometimes walks three miles to his work, with little more than a piece of barley bread for his dinner, eaten in the fields in wet clothes, and returns at night to a filthy crowded chamber to his supper, which is his principal meal. The distance from employment too is a frequent cause of not obtaining it all, and I believe if the artisans also were a little scattered, it would be better both for themselves, and for those who have occasion to employ them. But I consider the circumstance of there being so few gradations as to residence, as one of the greatest evils. A separate cottage in bad condition, with a small garden, generally too small to be of much advantage, and therefore neglected, forms, with I think one or two exceptions, the highest class of labourers' tenements. The consequence is the great stimulus to exertion, the hope of advancement, has scarcely any operation. If there were gradations, from a couple of rooms to comfortable family cottages, with land sufficient for a garden, a small orchard, and to keep a cow or two, there would be an obvious inducement continually held out to thrift and good character, in hopes of obtaining the higher prizes. Individuals would begin to strive for themselves, *and would cease as at present, to make common cause against the parish.\** The

\* Being on one low level, the labouring classes here have all one common corresponding feeling. Though apparently quiet and orderly, I found them in reality more violent and unreasonable, particularly the women, and less intelligent than I have experienced in the manufacturing districts.

success of one would excite the emulation of others; and the general character would be raised. The children of those in the higher rank of labourers would often be deterred from too early marriages by the dread of descending from their station, and the children of the lowest class would sometimes, from feelings of prudence or ambition, wait till they had the means or opportunity of advancement. The impulse of character would be felt, and the present practice of heedless marriages would cease to be so prevalent.\* The advantages of gardens to cottages I believe are universally allowed: the smallest size, as some of the labourers informed me, should be one-eighth of an acre. I am aware that an objection would be alleged to their having orchards, as affording them a cover for stealing and selling the farmers' apples; but as only those would possess them who had advanced themselves, or whose fathers had done so before them, I do not think the objection valid against the moral effect of making a higher gradation. Indeed, robbing orchards would probably be held in greater disrepute than it is, when some of the class who are now the offenders, might themselves suffer from the practice. I have heard it objected, that labourers keeping cows diminishes the farmers' profits; but experience in the many parts of the country where it is the custom, so fully proves its advantages, that I hold it unnecessary to say much upon the subject. A plentiful supply of milk, and *domestic employment for the females*, much more than counterbalance any inconvenience, if there be any, which I much doubt, from a labourer's cow. With a proper sized garden, a cow, a pig, and a few hens, a cottager's wife never need be at a loss for work, and the difference between a female so occupied, and the gossiping women of Bridgetown and Berry would soon become apparent. The men too under such circumstances can in a great degree find employment at home in wet weather, or at the seasons of the year when the least labour is wanted,

\* Passion, affection, the hope of offspring or of domestic comfort have comparatively little operation in producing marriages in this degraded class. Mere custom is one great cause. If the men could obtain employment as easily whilst single as when married, and could meet with accommodation undisturbed by the matrimonial uncomfords of others, and the women had a more marked choice between provident and improvident husbands, a great alteration for the better would take place.

which prevents them from being a burden to the farmers or the parish, or living upon their savings or wasting them at the alehouse. I have mentioned the highest class of cottages having land enough for two cows, and this I think might be desirable for three reasons: 1st. Because it is making a higher gradation, which is giving a greater stimulus and raising the moral character. 2dly. Because it would encrease the facility of obtaining milk to those who have no cow or who are temporarily in want of a supply; for where the labourers are wholly dependent for milk upon the farmers, they are seldom regularly or sufficiently accommodated. And 3dly. Because I think it highly desirable to have a reserve of labour for those periods of the year when there is the greatest demand for it, in a class of persons, who for a trifling advance as in harvest, or when they are particularly wanted, are willing to work for others, and at other times can depend upon themselves. In the present state of things where there is only one class of mere labourers, living from hand to mouth, there must either be at some seasons too few, or at others too many, and consequently the farmers must either suffer inconvenience from a scarcity of hands, or else from a degraded set of supernumeraries, frequently living partly upon the parish, and partly by depredations.\*

With respect to the method of bringing about the change, in case your Grace should be inclined to make the attempt either wholly or in part, I think the principal thing is to let your intentions be generally known, and the farmers who desire to have cottages built upon their farms may signify the same to your steward. In such cases the cottages should go with the farms. The labour of men resident is worth more than that of those at a distance, and a few steady labourers, dispersed over a farm, are a great advantage in preventing trespasses

\* Instead of keeping cows, the land might in many cases be applied to other purposes, according to circumstances. Where there has been a long connection between farmer and labourer, and the latter afterwards becomes by his prudence occupant of a little land, still holding himself at the disposal of his former master during periods of extra demand for labour, and in his turn receiving assistance from the farmer's teams, &c., how profitable, both morally and pecuniarily, is such a relation, compared with that arising from the system of pauper supernumeraries!



and depredations and in watching the cattle and sheep, besides the advantages to the labourer in living near his work, which are very considerable, especially in bad weather. There are I believe on the Berry Estate many plots of land, at present from their rough state or inferior quality of little or no value to the farmers, which would in the hands of industrious labourers, working for themselves at spare times, soon become fit for cultivation. Cottages, not built for the convenience of particular farms, should be held immediately from your Grace, and if let to proper persons, the trouble of collecting the rents would be very trifling. I think it would be well to encourage applications from the labourers themselves for cottages, or gardens, or land, as a stimulus to exertion and good conduct; but particular care should be taken to examine into the merits of each case.\* If a man applied to have his garden enlarged, I would first see that he made the most of what he had already. If he asked for land for a cow, I would not only make him shew that he had money to buy one, but I would ascertain that the cow was likely to be well managed. If he asked for a cottage, I would ascertain that a labourer was wanted, and give him accommodations according to his means *already provided*. A few applications properly scrutinized, and graciously complied with, I have no doubt would produce a very good effect, and could not be accompanied by any of those inconveniencies which frequently attend inconsiderate alterations. Many well meaning people attempt to remove evils of long standing and arising from complicated causes, by hasty and general processes. The consequence is, they utterly fail in their endeavours, or perhaps even aggravate the mischief, and then give up in despair or disgust. Whereas in such cases investigation, discretion, and time, are indispensable. Poverty produced by improvidence, is not removed, but confirmed by pecuniary bounty, and improvidence itself, as it proceeds from various causes, frequently demands as various remedies for its cure. From the method I would point out no disadvantages could well arise; for I would do nothing for those who

\* Much might be done at a small expense in improving and altering the present cottages.

did not give earnest of their merit by first doing something for themselves. I would assist the deserving in their endeavours, but the usual objects of attention I would leave to the consequences of their own misconduct. It is too much the fashion to bestow every thing on those who deserve nothing, and to let the meritorious struggle on, not only unaided but frequently under the disadvantage of having the undeserving preferred before them.\* Perhaps in the outset a little pecuniary encouragement to one or two of the most provident labourers, of two or three pounds each, to assist them in buying a cow or for some such purpose, might set the plan forward with advantage; but I am against giving except in very particular cases, and in aid of exertion, and not to save it. Whatever improvement takes place, I think it ought to make an adequate return in rent.

I am far from holding out that the adoption of the foregoing suggestions would work miracles, but I think it would produce an improvement in the condition of the labouring classes on your Grace's estate, and, with judicious management, a very considerable one; and at the same time would be the means of encreasing the value of the farms and of the property generally.

\*I would reverse this process, and if I may so say, would Macadamize the roads to self-advancement, at the same time making the ways of improvidence as difficult and cheerless as possible. I have learnt to look with a *very* suspicious eye at what are called the *unfortunate*, especially when they have plausible tongues.

**LONDON:**  
**IBOTSON AND PALMER, PRINTERS, SAVOY STREET, STRAND.**







